

PTI leaders declared POs
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Irked over the continuous absence of PTI leaders Murad Saeed, Hammad Azhar and former party leader Farrukh Habib, an anti-terrorism court in Islamabad on Monday declared them proclaimed offenders (POs) in the Judicial Complex attack cases. The court also issued arrest warrants for Wasiq Qayyum Abbasi, Raja Basharat, and others for failing to show up.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXII

No. 50

Regd. No. 241

RAMAZAN 17 1446 -- TUESDAY, MARCH 18 2025

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

No salary or pension hike planned in budget, NA told

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has made it crystal clear that there is no room for a salary or pension hike for the government employees in the upcoming budget.

In a written response to the National Assembly, the minister stated that pay scales and allowances won't be revamped through the hiring and ceiling limits are under review. Employees waiting for the raise will have to make do with the current structure.

Meanwhile, the Finance Ministry laid bare the country's financial struggles, revealing that as of June 2023, external debts stood at a whopping \$126.141 billion making up 43.03 per cent of GDP.

Adding fuel to the fire, the commerce Ministry reported a massive trade deficit of \$154 billion over the past five years. While exports clocked in at \$136 billion, import shot up to \$291 billion, mainly due to economic growth and rising demands.

WB, Finance Ministry agree to continue collaboration: A key follow-up meeting was held here on Monday between the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, and his team at the Finance Division, with the World Bank (WB) team on Pakistan's national growth and fiscal program as part of the 10-year Country Partnership Framework (CPF) with a \$20 billion commitment, focusing on key development areas like health, education, climate resilience, and sustainable growth.

The meeting was attended by senior officers from the Ministry of Finance and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). The primary focus of the meeting was a continued discussion on the World Bank's investment financing for economic reforms. The World Bank team presented their ongoing work regarding the preparation of a comprehensive National Growth and Fiscal Program.

This program covers a wide range of

critical subjects related to economic and fiscal reforms, including strategies aimed at unlocking constraints to inclusive and sustainable growth, mobilizing revenues, improving expenditure quality, and enhancing efficiency and accountability in service delivery.

A major goal of these reforms is to create the necessary conditions for increased productive private investment while ensuring more public resources are allocated for inclusive development. Additionally, the World Bank briefed the Finance Minister on their ongoing data analysis of policy proposals and recommendations gathered from various chambers, trade bodies, and associations during the pre-budget consultations. This collaborative approach is aligned with the government's early budget process, which was brought forward to January this year to ensure a robust and realistic revenue policy based on sound economic considerations.

During the meeting, Minister Aurangzeb emphasized the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to fiscal, trade, and private sector reforms that spans both the federal and provincial levels. He highlighted the importance of designing reforms that are incentivized through outcome-based and performance-based indicators directly linked to human development and socio-economic growth. The Finance Minister reiterated that a nationally coordinated approach, as exemplified by the National Fiscal Pact, is crucial to ensuring macroeconomic stability.

He stressed that this unified approach would be the cornerstone for achieving the country's aspirations for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, ensuring the well-being of all citizens. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to continued collaboration between the Ministry of Finance, the World Bank, and all relevant stakeholders, in order to advance the reform agenda and drive positive change for the future of Pakistan's economy.

KP police stations, check posts attacked, ASI martyred

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police have successfully repelled several miscreants attacks on police stations and check-posts in the province over the past two nights. The Central Police Office's reports revealed that miscreants attacks were reported in Bannu, Karak, Dera Ismail Khan, Tank, and Peshawar, where police have bravely countered the assaults.

The temporary hideouts of miscreants in the mountainous region between Lakki Marwat, Karak, and Mianwali were also destroyed. In Peshawar, unidentified attackers hurled a hand grenade at the Regi police station's Malazai checkpoint. However, no casualties were reported and a search operation was launched to track down the perpetrators.

Meanwhile, in Lakki Marwat, militants targeted the Gambila Police Station from two directions, but the Quick Response Force (QRF) retaliated swiftly forcing the attackers to flee.

The exchange of fire lasted for about 15 minutes, forcing the outlaws to flee without causing any casualties, said Lakki Marwat DPO Jawwad Ishaq. In Khyber's Jamrud Bypass, militants attacked a Bara Rifles security checkpoint, but security personnel repelled the assault. Two security personnel sustained injuries in the fire-fight, and a search operation was launched in the area.

Meanwhile, in counter-terror operations, police killed two terrorists in Lakki Marwat and Karak. After being pushed back, militants attacked Abbas Khatak checkpoint. In Tank, police forces killed one terrorist and injured several others in retaliation after an attack on the Nasran checkpoint. In Karak, security forces eliminated militants commander Kashif Shakar Khel.

According to the Central Police Office, a brave and dedicated ASI, Noor Salam, was martyred by a sniper bullet during an operation in Karak. Police have intensified search operations in affected areas to apprehend the remaining militants.

Meanwhile, a kidnapping attempt on a Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) official was foiled by the public in Bannu on Monday.

According to police, the incident took place in the Huwaid Adda area, where armed men attempted to abduct CTD official Javed. However, local residents intervened and thwarted the kidnapping attempt.

The assailants physically assaulted Javed, leaving him injured. They also managed to snatch his official pistol and mobile phone before fleeing the scene. The injured officer was shifted to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital in Bannu for medical treatment. Police have launched an investigation and searching for the suspects.

Police thwarts terrorist attacks: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Adviser Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif stated on Monday that the federal government should refrain from political rhetoric and instead cooperate in the war against terrorism.

In a statement, Saif said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police was bravely confronting terrorists, and in the last three days, the police had thwarted multiple terrorist attacks, adding that in Bannu and Lakki Marwat, the public stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the police to repel terrorist assaults. "The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government pays tribute to the brave police and the proud public.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur distributing gifts among children.

Trump says he and Putin will discuss power plants

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US President Donald Trump said he would speak to Russia's Vladimir Putin on Tuesday about ending the Ukraine war, with territorial concessions by Kyiv and control of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant likely to feature prominently in the talks.

"We want to see if we can bring that war to an end," Trump told reporters on Air Force One during a flight to the Washington area from Florida. "Maybe we can, maybe we can't, but I think we have a very good chance. I'll be speaking to President Putin on Tuesday. A lot of work's been done over the weekend."

Trump is trying to win Putin's support for a 30-day ceasefire proposal that Ukraine accepted last week, as both sides continued trading heavy aerial strikes early on Monday and Russia moved closer to ejecting Ukrainian forces from their months-old foothold in the western Russian region of Kursk. Asked what concessions were being considered in ceasefire negotiations, Trump said: "We'll be talking about land. We'll be talking about power plants ... We're already talking about that, dividing up certain assets."

Trump gave no details but

was likely referring to the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia facility in Ukraine, Europe's largest nuclear plant. Russia and Ukraine have accused each other of risking an accident at the plant with their actions. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov confirmed on Monday that Putin would speak with Trump by phone but declined to comment on Trump's remarks about land and power plants.

The Kremlin said on Friday that Putin had sent Trump a message about his ceasefire plan via US envoy Steve Witkoff, who held talks in Moscow, expressing "cautious optimism" that a deal could be reached to end the three-year conflict. In separate appearances on Sunday TV shows in the United States, Witkoff, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Trump's National Security Adviser, Mike Waltz, emphasized there were still challenges to be worked out before Russia agrees to a ceasefire, much less a final peaceful resolution to the war.

Asked on ABC whether the US would accept a peace deal in which Russia was allowed to keep Ukrainian territory that it has seized, Waltz replied: "We have to ask ourselves, is it in our national interest? Is it realis-

tic? ... Are we going to drive every Russian off of every inch of Ukrainian soil?" "We can talk about what is right or wrong but also have to talk about the reality of the situation on the ground," he said, adding that the alternative to finding compromises on land and other issues was "endless warfare" and even World War Three.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said he sees a good chance to end the war after Kyiv accepted the US proposal for a 30-day interim ceasefire. However, Zelenskyy has consistently said the sovereignty of his country is not negotiable and that Russia must surrender the territory it has seized. Russia seized the Crimea peninsula in 2014 and now controls most of four eastern Ukrainian regions since it invaded the country in 2022.

Zelenskyy has not responded publicly to Waltz's remarks. Russia will seek "ironclad" guarantees in any peace deal that NATO nations exclude Kyiv from membership and that Ukraine will remain neutral, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko told Russian media outlet Izvestia in remarks published on Monday that made no reference to the ceasefire proposal.

The Frontier Post

In-camera meeting today
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly has announced stringent security measures ahead of the in-camera meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security, scheduled to take place at the Parliament House on March 18 at 11:00 AM. According to the spokesperson, the National Assembly Secretariat confirmed that unauthorized individuals would be strictly barred from entry.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Afiniti Information System led by CEO, Mr Jerome Kapelus called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

PM chairs review meeting on food security, agriculture

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday here held a review meeting of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research. Speaking during the meeting, he said agriculture was the backbone of the country's economy.

The government would provide all facilities for the progress of agriculture sector and for increasing agricultural production, he said adding the services of young agriculture researchers from across the country would be hired for the progress of the agriculture sector. He directed that strict action should be initiated as soon as possible against the companies involved in the business of sub standard crop seeds.

He instructed that steps to increase edible oil production in Pakistan should be speeded up so that precious foreign exchange spent on edible oil import should be saved. He said research work in Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) should be expedited.

He further directed that farm mechanization should be promoted all over the country in collaboration with the provincial governments, private sector and other stakeholders.

Pakistan's IT workforce capable of competing at global market

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that Pakistan's IT talented workforce has the capability to compete at the global market while all necessary facilities were being provided to IT companies to achieve the target of \$25 billion in exports. The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with a four-member delegation led by Jerome Kapelus, CEO of the renowned American multinational IT company, Afiniti that called on him, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister welcomed Afiniti's interest in further investment in Pakistan's IT sector and suggested to Afiniti Pakistan to establish a world-class call center in the country for national and international clients.

He further informed that he was personally overseeing programmes to equip the country's talented youth with IT, AI, and other advanced technical skills. Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima Khawaja and senior officials from the relevant institutions were also present during the meeting. The delegation appreciated the expertise of Pakistani IT professionals and their dedication to the sector's development. Jerome Kapelus said that Pakistan's IT sector was highly suitable for investment and business and currently, more than 1,000 highly skilled and capable Pakistani professionals were working at Afiniti Pakistan.

Steps should be taken to train youth regarding value-added products made from fruits and vegetables, he said adding measures should also be taken for the provision of easy agriculture loans to youth.

He said all matters related to dissolution of Pakistan Agricultural

Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO) should be expedited. He expressed satisfaction at the strategy prepared for digitalization of supply chain from farm to port to facilitate exports of agricultural products.

(Continued on Back Page)

Pakistan terms Indian PM's remarks one-sided

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Responding to media queries regarding the remarks made by the Indian Prime Minister during a podcast with Lex Fridman, Pakistan on Monday said the remarks are misleading and one-sided.

In a statement, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said they conveniently omit the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, which remains unresolved for last seven decades despite India's solemn assurances to

the United Nations, Pakistan and the Kashmiri people.

The statement said India's fictitious narrative of victimhood cannot hide its involvement in fomenting terrorism on Pakistan's soil and the state-sanctioned oppression in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). It said that instead of blaming others, India should reflect on its own record of orchestrating targeted assassinations, subversion and terrorism in foreign territories. It said Pakistan has

always advocated constructive engagement and result-oriented dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues, including the core dispute of Jammu and Kashmir. However, it said, peace and stability in South Asia have remained hostage to India's rigid approach and hegemonic ambitions.

It said, "The anti-Pakistan narrative, emanating from India, vitiates the bilateral environment and impedes the prospects for peace and cooperation. It must stop."

India, New Zealand agree to deepen ties

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his New Zealand counterpart agreed on Monday to deepen their security and economic ties, as the two countries announced the revival of talks for a free trade agreement.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon is on a five-day visit to India with the biggest-ever delegation to accompany a Kiwi premier on a foreign trip, comprising officials, and community and business leaders. Modi and Luxon met in New Delhi where they signed agreements on enhancing cooperation in defense, education and sports.

"We had detailed discussions on various aspects of our bilateral relations. We have decided to strengthen and institutionalize our defense and security partnership," Modi said during a joint press briefing. Their defense ties will include joint exercises and training, with plans for mutual cooperation in the sector's industry, he added.

On Sunday, the two countries agreed to revive free trade negotiations that have been stalled for over a decade, following talks between New Zealand Trade and Investment

Minister Todd McClay and his Indian counterpart, Piyush Goyal. "It has been decided to start negotiations on a mutually beneficial Free Trade Agreement between the two countries," Modi said.

"Mutual cooperation and investment will be encouraging in areas like dairy, food processing, and pharma. We have given priority to mutual cooperation in the areas of renewable energy and critical minerals." Bilateral trade between India and New Zealand stood at about \$1.7 billion in the 2023-24 financial year.

"It is through trade that we can boost the economies of both our countries, providing more jobs and higher incomes for Kiwis and Indians," Luxon said in a statement. Indians are the biggest source of skilled migrants, the third-largest ethnic group and the second-largest source of international students in New Zealand.

"I think you're seeing an Indian government that's been incredibly generous and very, very welcoming to New Zealand, and it speaks to the way that they also want to deepen their relationship," Luxon said. "We have brought the biggest delegation that's

ever accompanied a Prime Minister ... because we actually want to make this as big as it possibly can be, because the size of the prize is immense.

"And actually, what's this all about? It's about actually cashback into Kiwis' pockets and we do that by growing our economy and expanding our trade opportunities." New Zealand is an "important component" of India's Indo-Pacific policy, said Dr. Udai Bhanu Singh, former senior researcher at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses.

But strengthening ties with the Pacific country is likely part of Delhi's ongoing efforts to broker trade deals with other nations after US President Donald Trump's decision to impose reciprocal tariffs on imported goods from countries, including India. "India is facing tremendous pressure from Trumpian policy of reciprocal tariffs and it would like to keep its options open as far as possible," Singh told Arab News. "Even though this coming together may have been precipitated by Trump's tariff assertion, the fact is that New Zealand and India are finding common grounds to work on." — Arab News

Allocating £190m for a new Varsity in questioned

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Senator and president human rights cell of PPP Farhatullah Babar has issued the following statement on Monday.

The decision to build yet another university in Islamabad with the 190 million pounds that the British government had seized from a businessman and returned to Pakistan is whimsical, flawed, and strongly condemned.

The decision taken behind closed doors without debate at a time of domestic economic volatility, rising debt servicing, shrinking international development aid, changing donor priorities and Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces burning the decision reeks of a dictatorial mindset, further distorting the already distorted public finance system in the country.

What is the rationale of spending 70 billion rupees to build yet another university when the existing universities, facing a shortfall of 60 billion rupees, are facing internal turmoil due to non-payment of salaries and pensions and some on the verge of closure?

The people of Pakistan still do not know the mystery behind the 190 million pounds transferred from the UK to Pakistan, the politics and political engineering behind it. The abrupt decision to build a university with this money has only compounded the mystery and raises many questions that need answers.

If at all the 190 million pounds legitimately belong to the government of Pakistan, then it can be legitimately demanded that it be spent on education in all provinces, and not merely on building one university in Islamabad

Twenty-six million children in all provinces are out of school, and the existing public sector universities in the provinces are in financial crisis, resulting in frustration, discontent, strikes, and brain drain.



KARACHI: A large number of Muslims break their fast during Holy Month of Ramadan at sea view beach. —INP Photo

Security conference held to review law and order ahead of Eid

KARACHI (APP): A high-level security meeting chaired by Director General Pakistan Rangers Sindh Major General Muhammad Shamraiz was held at the Rangers headquarters to assess Karachi's overall law and order situation.

The meeting focused on reviewing the special security plan for upcoming religious events, including Youm-e-Ali, the final days of Ramzan, Chand Raat, and Eid-ul-Fitr, said a news release on Monday.

Discussions were held on intensifying joint operations by Rangers and police against habitual criminals in the city, with additional measures to strengthen security checks at Karachi's entry and exit points.

Authorities emphasized strict adherence to the provided directives in accordance with laws and regulations. The meeting also included a strategic review to ensure law and order and monitor elements involved in spreading hatred, illegal collection of Zakat, and extremist activities.

Key officials, including the IGP Sindh, Commissioner Karachi, Additional IGPs of Special Branch, Operations Branch, Joint DG Intelligence Bureau, DIGPs, and senior officers from the police, Rangers, and intelligence agencies, participated in the meeting.

LDA seals another 87 properties

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Development Authority (LDA) on Monday sealed another 87 properties during its on-going operation on illegal commercial activities.

On the direction of Lahore Development Authority (LDA) Director General Tahir Farooq, LDA teams targeted different localities, including Gulberg, Faisal Town, Sabzar, and the vicinity of UBD Canal Road.

As many as 35 properties were sealed in Gulberg and Faisal Town while another 18 on Canal Road. The teams also sealed 34 properties in Sabzar during a recovery operation.

Sharjeel orders crackdown on excessive transport fares

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has ordered action against those charging excessive fares during Eid-ul-Fitr.

In an effort to provide relief to the public, the Sindh government has directed transport authorities to regulate fares, and a crackdown is underway against transporters imposing unauthorised fare hikes. Accordingly, instructions have been issued to the DIG Traffic and commis-

sioners to take immediate action against violators.

Sindh Senior Minister & provincial minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon has stated that the Sindh government is taking all possible measures to protect the public from additional financial burdens during Eid-ul-Fitr. Strict action will be taken against those charging excessive fares, and no one will be allowed to exploit the public.

He stated that transporters arbitrarily over-

charging passengers will face fines, legal action, and possible closures. Transport owners must ensure compliance with the fixed fares; otherwise, legal action will be taken against them.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon urged the public to immediately file a complaint if any transporter is charging excessive fares.

The Transport Department has directed authorities to inspect bus stands and terminals across Sindh daily and take action against those charging excessive fares.

Govt protecting rights and welfare of religious minorities: Sukhdev

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Spokesperson for Government of Sindh Sukhdev Hemnani stated that Sindh Government is sincerely committed to protecting and promoting rights and welfare of religious minorities.

Shedding light on government's one year performance, Sukhdev Hemnani said that Sindh Government has established dedicated complaint cells for minorities at district level in police department and district administrations and 06 special

facilitation desks at divisional level to directly address complaints and issues of minorities across the province.

He further added that Sindh Government is taking special measures to provide financial assistance to religious minorities and in just past one year, more than 21,000 beneficiaries have received financial support for various needs; more than 500 families provided with grant-in-aid for marriages; a dedicated scholarship programme for minorities launched to support students from low-

income families.

"Interfaith harmony committees have been formed at district level across 8 districts, while CCTV cameras have been installed in 253 sensitive religious sites across province including in 192 temples, 42 churches and 19 Gurdwaras to enhance security measures.

In addition, 98 development schemes for religious places have been completed in past one year, while 114 more schemes will be completed later this year," highlighted Sukhdev Hemnani.

PJA launches four training courses for judges

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Judicial Academy (PJA) on Monday launched four training courses aimed at enhancing the professional capabilities of judicial officers.

Three of these are two-week performance evaluation training programs (2025) designed for civil judges-cum-judicial magistrates, senior civil judges-cum-judicial magistrates, and additional sessions judges. The fourth is a six-day specialized training course on "Revenue Documents Analysis and Inheritance Issues" for judges of the district judiciary.

The inauguration ceremony was presided over by PJA Director General

Justice (Retd.) Sardar Ahmad Naqem. Also in attendance were Adviser and Director Admin Hafeez Ullah Khan, Director Program Mansoor Ahmad Khan, Director of Research Bushra Zaman, Director of Training Irum Ayaz, and senior instructors Mahmood Azam, Ayesha Khalid, and Muhammad Khalid Khan.

Addressing the participants, Justice (Retd.) Sardar Ahmad Naqem emphasized the importance of continuous professional development in the judiciary. He stated that these training courses are tailored to meet the practical requirements of judi-

cial officers, ensuring they are well-equipped to dispense justice efficiently. He further highlighted that a well-trained judiciary plays a crucial role in strengthening public trust in the justice system.

The PJA Director General expressed hope that the specialized training on the judicial analysis of revenue documents would help judges in the smooth administration of justice.

The six-day training course was attended by civil judges, senior civil judges, and additional sessions judges, focusing on the complexities of revenue documents and inheritance issues.

National unity urged to combat terrorism

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Climate Change, Dr. Shezra Mansab Ali Khan, on Monday emphasized the need for national unity and a multi-layered approach to combat the resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan.

Talking to a private news channel, she highlighted the importance of collective action by all political and military forces to ensure the country's security. She stressed that the National Security Committee's meeting is a significant step toward addressing the issue.

She advocated for open discussions in the National Assembly and the Senate to keep the public informed and strengthens democratic processes. Recalling past successes, she pointed out that collaborative efforts between the civilian government and military leadership under former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif played a crucial role in eradicating terrorism after 2014.

She urged all political parties, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), to engage in unconditional dialogue to develop a comprehensive strategy against terrorism. Addressing concerns about external threats, Dr. Shezra condemned foreign interference, for anti-Pakistan activities.

She called for a unified national narrative to counter misinformation and defend the country's sovereignty. She also underlined the importance of reviving the National Action Plan and fostering cooperation between federal and provincial governments to ensure long-term peace and stability.

LHC seeks response from govt on Reema's petition

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday sought a reply from the Punjab government on a petition filed by film star Reema Khan, challenging the non-formation of a tribunal to hear defamation cases.

A single bench, headed by Justice Abid Aziz Sheikh, conducted the initial hearing on the petition filed by the film star. Advocate Jehanzeb Sukhaira, representing Reema Khan, argued that the 2024 Defamation Law mandated the establishment of tribunals for defamation cases. However, no tribunal has been formed, leaving several cases, including Khan's, in limbo, he added.

He noted that before the new law, additional sessions judges and civil courts handled defamation cases, but under the current legislation, only a designated tribunal has jurisdiction.

He pleaded with the court to issue directions for immediate formation and activation of the defamation tribunals. At this stage, a provincial law officer assured the court that the tribunals would be set up after Eid. Following the arguments, the court issued a notice to the Punjab government and directed it to submit a response. The next hearing is scheduled for April 10.

MD SSWMB for completing cleanliness arrangements

KARACHI (APP): The Managing Director (MD) Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB), Tariq Ali Nizamani, Monday, directed to complete all necessary arrangements for ensuring cleanliness on the auspicious occasion of Youm-e-Ali.

He, while chairing a meeting with all relevant officers and private companies, instructed to complete the arrangements for cleaning the procession routes of Youm-e-Ali around the metropolis, keep all dustbins clean on the procession routes and deploy additional staff and machinery, said a statement issued here.

The MD also directed to set up complaint camps and ensure timely redressal of complaints received on 1128 and the SSWMB complaints app so that maximum relief could be provided to the public. He said that in connection with the Youm-e-Ali, 21st Ramazan ul mubarak, the arrangements for cleaning.

Sindh CM approves to abolish many TO, DEO, Director posts

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah while presiding over a review meeting of school education emphasised the importance of foundational learning and early childhood care & education (ECCE) and approved the decentralisation of financial and administrative powers to the school level for headmasters as well supported the dissolution of additional or duplicate posts for town officers, District Education Officers (DEOs), and directors stressed the importance of digitizing the education department.

This digitisation will involve monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes, such as tracking attendance for teachers and students using facial recognition technology. Moreover, there will be an effort to eliminate unnecessary administrative layers from the taluka to the divisional level.

A significant emphasis will be placed on technical education and skill development through initiatives like Middle Tech and Matric Tech, which will also incorporate STREAM Labs in both formal and non-formal sectors. The Chief Minister also highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships through the Sindh Education Fund (SEF) model and Education Management Organizations (EMOs), aiming to bridge the gap between primary and post-primary schools by enhancing existing schools and adding classrooms with essential facilities.

The meeting was attended by Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Ombudsman Sindh Sohail Rajput, PSCM Agha Wasif, Chairman of the Planning and Development (P&D) Najam Shah, Secretary of School Education Zahid Abbasi, Secretary of Finance

Fayaz Jatoti, and others.

The Chief Minister was informed that there are 40,990 schools in the province, which include 36,300 primary schools, 2,600 elementary schools, 1,600 secondary schools, and 490 higher secondary schools. Current enrollment across all schools stands at 5.2 million, comprising approximately 3.09 million boys (59pc) and 2.12 million girls (41pc). The education minister reported that the number of out-of-school children is 7.8 million.

The CM set a target of bringing one million children to school during the next financial year. He expressed his satisfaction that the girls enrolment in the schools was encouraging. To a question, the CM learnt that the net enrolment rate for primary education is 67 per cent, and for secondary education, it is 22 per cent. He emphasised the need to address the challenges in transitioning from primary to post-primary education by upgrading primary schools.

To facilitate this transition, Murad Ali Shah approved initiating second shifts of elementary schools within existing primary schools to help close the gap between primary and post-primary education.

In consultation with the education department, the Chief Minister decided to abolish several positions of District Education Officers (DEOs) at the district level, including DEO SEMIS, DEO Academics, DEO Sports, and DEO Quality Assurance. The number of Taluka Education Officers (TEOs) will also be reduced; instead of four, there will be one TEO per taluka. Moreover, instead of having two DEOs (one for secondary and one for primary), there will be one DEO per district for better unity of command and efficient

administration. Similarly, at the divisional level, there will be one Director of School Education instead of two.

The CM has decided to transform existing high schools into model schools, establishing four model schools in each taluka to enhance the quality of education. By the 2025-26 academic year, approximately 150 schools will be developed as model institutions, with a total of 600 schools expected to be transformed by the end of the 2028-29 academic year.

The meeting decided to strengthen School Management Committees (SMCs), enhancing training and community engagement and decentralising powers at the school level through a clustering policy. The goal is to increase the institutional capacity of teacher training institutes such as STEDA, PITE, DCAR, and others.

The school clustering policy will be implemented across the province. A total of 1,656 clusters of schools have been identified. District Education Officers (DEOs) and heads of Cluster Hub Schools will receive training. The chief minister instructed the education department to notify the Cluster Hub Schools along with their respective job descriptions. The target for the 2025-26 academic year is to have 1,150 clusters with cost centers.

The Chief Minister stated that many schools lack essential facilities such as water, sanitation, washrooms, compound walls, and solar power.

He directed the education department to empower headmasters to access these facilities through a school-specific budget. He approved upgrading 1600 primary schools to the secondary level, equipped with solar power and drinking water facilities.



LAHORE: A worker busy in hanging vermicelli to dry after preparing it, as demand has increased during Eidul Fitr. —APP Photo

Commissioner reviews campaign against profiteering during Ramazan

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner Karachi Syed Hassan Naqvi on Monday chaired a meeting of deputy commissioners and senior officials of the Bureau of Supply to review the performance of administration's campaign against profiteering during Ramazan at his office on Monday. The meeting was attended among others by all deputy commissioners, additional commissioner Ghulam Mehdi Shah, assistant commissioner headquarters Rabia Syed, and senior officials of the Supply department.

The meeting reviewed the action taken against profiteers and other strategic activities adopted to control the prices. Performance of commissioner counters established at super stores, camps installed at different markets and especially the arrangements of sale of food items at official prices in the supervision of officers/magistrates.

The meeting discussed the efforts to sell items at official prices under the supervision of officers in detail. It was decided that magistrates would spend maximum time at food stalls and shops to ensure the sale of items at official prices. Commissioner Naqvi emphasized the need for officials to spend maximum time checking prices in markets and bazaars to prevent complaints of overpricing. The meeting expressed satisfaction over efforts to curb profiteering, and the commissioner praised the officials for their efforts, stressing the need to improve them further.

STATION SUPPLY DEPOT PESHAWAR CANTONMENT

TENDER NOTICE

1. Station Supply Depot Army Service Corps, Peshawar Cantonment invites sealed quotations from all government contractors for provision of materials for development/upgradation of this depot out of budget allotment for FY2024/2025.
2. Quotations will be deposited in envelopes named as "COSSD Peshawar Cantt"
3. All quotations/ bids will be submitted latest by 07Apr 2025 at 10:00 hours and will be opened in the presence of all bidders on 07Apr 2025 at 10:30 hours in Commanding Officer, SSD Peshawar office.
4. The Commanding Officer, Station Supply Depot Peshawar Cantonment reserves the right to reject any bidders. Peshawar Cantonment, reserves the quotations/ bids at any time by assigning plausible reasons to the
5. List of goods and other related information may be obtained from Station Supply Depot, Peshawar Cantonment during working hours

Admin Officer SSD Peshawar Cantt

Cell No: 03343335567 - 03335297685

1,000 tractors to be given under Grow More Wheat Programme initiative

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani said on Monday that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz was determined to promote agricultural mechanization in the province.

He said this while presiding over a high-level meeting held at Agriculture House on Monday. The meeting reviewed the arrangements for the upcoming event under the Chief Minister's Grow More Wheat Programme. He said 1,000 tractors would be provided free of cost to farmers through a transparent balloting process. Meeting also finalized various welfare projects for farmers, to be included in the upcoming provincial budget. During the meeting, the Agriculture Minister revealed that 57,733 applications were received under the Grow More Wheat Programme, out of which 21,496 applicants were declared eligible after verification.

Tractors of 50-horsepower would be allotted through a transparent draw to farmers cultivating wheat on more than 12.5 acres, he said and added that the balloting ceremony would be held under the supervision of the Punjab CM. The Minister fur-

ther said that the Agriculture Extension department has verified wheat cultivation on 560,000 acres under this programme. The Punjab government was committed to promote agricultural mechanization, allocating Rs 35 billion in financing over the next two years.

Farmers and service providers would receive interest-free agricultural loans of up to Rs 50 million through banks. He said that additionally, 1,000 high-tech machines would be provided through interest-free loans over the next two years, benefiting small-scale service providers. This programme would help increase the production of wheat, rice, orchards and maize crops and would be launched as a pilot project in the next fiscal budget, he added.

Speaking about the Kisan Card initiative, the Minister said that 539,000 farmers had benefited from the first phase. In the second phase, farmers owning up to 25 acres would be included. Moreover, the per-acre loan limit under the Kisan Card would be increased to Rs 40,000 and processing fee would be reduced, he added.

He said, "The Punjab government has allocated Rs 75 billion for the

second phase of the Kisan Card. This initiative would also facilitate the purchase of agricultural inputs, including diesel. Under Phase 1 of the Green Tractor Programme, 9,000 farmers have already received tractors. In the next fiscal year, 9,500 tractors (ranging from 60 to 85 horsepower) would be distributed under Phase 2 of the programme."

He further said that additionally, under the Solarization of Agricultural Tube Wells Programme, 8,000 farmers had already received allocation letters through a digital balloting system and twelve service and supply companies were on-board for this initiative. Furthermore, 80% of the construction for four Model Agriculture Malls in Punjab had been completed.

Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani said that Punjab government was also considering constructing ten more Model Agriculture Malls in the next budget and added that 2,000 agricultural graduates would be recruited for internships in the upcoming fiscal year. Speaking at the meeting, Punjab Agriculture Secretary Iftikhar Ali Sahu emphasized that modern machinery was essential to achieve agricultural production targets.

Action against encroachments in Peshawar Cantt

Seven trucks of goods seized, 21 individuals booked



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Cantonment Board Peshawar and the District Administration Peshawar conducted a large-scale joint operation against illegal encroachments in Peshawar Cantt. The operation took place at various key locations, including Saddar, Chowk Fawara, Nothia Bazaar, Liaquat Bazaar, Shafi Market, and Gora Bazaar.

To ensure the operation was carried out effectively and in an organized manner, the Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar assigned a team of senior officers, including Assistant Commissioner Shah Alam, Assistant Commissioner Matani, Additional Assistant Commissioner Cantt, and Additional Assistant Commissioner City. Furthermore, Cantonment Executive Officer

Chaudhry Babar Hussain deployed a Vigilance and Enforcement Squad consisting of 100 personnel, equipped with heavy machinery, under the leadership of Enforcement Superintendent Raja Yasir. During the operation, comprehensive security arrangements were made to maintain law and order. Fifty police personnel were deployed to ensure the smooth execution of the operation.

SP Cantt and SP City personally supervised the security measures and instructed the concerned SHOs to ensure effective communication with the enforcement teams.

As a result of the operation, the Cantonment Board Peshawar seized seven trucks of goods, and 21 individuals were booked at the West Police Station. The enforcement teams cleared the illegally occupied areas, restoring public pathways and maintaining order in the markets.

The anti-encroachment campaign received positive feedback from local traders, who appreciated the authorities' efforts to keep public spaces free of encroachments and improve the business environment. The District Administration and Cantonment Board Peshawar reaffirmed their commitment to continue such operations in the future to keep public spaces free from encroachments and ensure a more organized urban environment.

SBBWU hosts dialogue on role of universities in promotion education

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar hosted an open house dialogue on the role of universities in promoting education under the patronage of think tank, Forum for Inuit, Knowledge and Review (FIKR), a flagship project of Pakistan Development Foundation (PDF).

The event featured prominent speakers, including Member Shariah Appellate Bench Supreme Court of Pakistan, Justice Dr. Qibla Ayaz, Vice Chancellor SBBWU, Prof. Dr. Safia Ahmed, Chairman PDF, Muhammad Bilal Sethi, and Director Students Affairs SBBWU, Prof. Dr. Farhat Humayun,

faculty and students of the varsity.

The dialogue highlighted the crucial role universities play in Pakistan's development, despite facing limited resources. The discussion emphasized the need for universities to showcase their contributions and for faculty members to emerge as public scholars, undertaking productive research and engaging in public forums to promote their institutions.

The event aimed to provide a platform for students, faculty, and stakeholders to discuss the significance of universities in promoting education and development in Pakistan.

The dialogue emphasized the overlooking of the role of Pakistani universities.

Participants regretted that powerful circles and those at the helm of affairs claim that universities are not playing any role, while Pakistani universities, despite their lack of resources, are serving the nation in an unparalleled way.

The universities are being blamed harms caused as a result of wrong political decisions, which is an injustice to universities. Dr. Qibla said that if universities and faculty want to prove their worth and convince people about their role, they must emerge as public scholars. Faculty should increase the trend of productive research and gain public opinion through their expertise.

When faculty have public

opinion, they will be heard. They should participate in public forums and present the case for universities. VC Safia Ahmed said that the lack of resources is a major problem for universities, but despite this, they are continuing to serve the people. She said that the most important people for a university are its students, faculty, and staff.

Chairman PDF, Muhammad Bilal Sethi said that universities and faculty have not been able to present their case with strength, which is why their services are not being acknowledged.

The purpose of the think tank, FIKR is to provide a platform to the people to highlight their services and good.

UOP appoints Muhammad Nauman as Media Officer

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The University of Peshawar has assigned additional responsibilities to Assistant Professor Muhammad Noman Khan of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication as the Media Officer.



According to a notification issued by the Deputy Registrar (Establishment), Assistant Professor Ali Imran Bangash of the Journalism Department has been relieved of his additional responsibilities as Media Officer.

The Vice-Chancellor, exercising powers under the University Act, has

assigned the additional responsibilities of Media Officer to Assistant Professor Muhammad Noman Khan of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication.

It is worth noting that Muhammad Noman Khan has previously performed duties as Media Officer.

ASJ convicts murderer for life imprisonment

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Additional Session Judge (ASJ) Peshawar Arif Shah has sentenced a man to life imprisonment for murdering another person over a minor altercation.

The counsel for complainant Khalid Anwar

advocate argued that on April 7, 2017, the accused, Shah Faisal, fired at the victim, Shakir Zain, from his moving car near the Motorway Toll Plaza.

The victim was shot in the neck and later succumbed to his injuries. The police registered a case against Shah Faisal at the

Chamkani Police Station.

During the trial, 13 witnesses testified against the accused, and the evidence presented confirmed that Shah Faisal had indeed fired at Shakir Zain over a trivial matter.

The prosecution argued that the accused did not deserve any leniency, hav-

ing taken a human life over a minor issue.

In contrast, the defense claimed that the prosecution had failed to prove its case and that the witnesses' statements were contradictory. Nevertheless, the court ultimately handed down a life imprisonment sentence to Shah Faisal for murder.

Corruption, drugs within prisons wouldn't be tolerated, warns DIG

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Deputy Inspector General Sahibzada Muhammad Qaiser said that Drugs, ice and corruption and other mismanagement in prisons will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

After taking charge, he visited various jails and after listening to the problems of the prisoners, he issued orders on the spot. Peshawar Regional DIG Prisons Sahibzad Muhammad Qaiser visited various jails and reviewed the administrative affairs, other facilities and food and cleanliness provided to the prisoners.

Continuing his visits, he made surprise visits to District Jail Charsadda and District Jail Jamrud yesterday, where the deployed officials started running, after which he listened to the problems of the prison-

ers, and personally went and got information about the food and other facilities of the prisoners.

Along with the cleanliness of the jails, he strictly implemented the use of drugs and ice and said that the use of drugs inside the jail will not be tolerated under any circumstances, after which he himself went

to the jail kitchen and checked the quality of the food prepared for the prisoners.

During his visit, he issued instructions to the jail administration to take care of the prisoners, ensure cleanliness on a daily basis and provide high-quality food to the prisoners.

He said that he would not tolerate any negligence or corruption on the part of the jail officials during their duty. It may be recalled that DIG Prisons Sahibzad Muhammad Qaiser has started meeting the prisoners on a daily basis after starting his visits to various jails in the Peshawar region.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Shahab Ali Shah chairing a meeting regarding Sehat Card.

Trodher Iemphasizes merit and transparency in sndustrial sector

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Industries, Abdul Karim Tordher has directed the Department of Industries to ensure strict adherence to merit and transparency in all professional responsibilities.

He emphasized that the department must efficiently fulfill its duties while

maintaining the highest standards of service delivery.

He stated that the entire system of the department should be based on transparency, ensuring maximum ease for the public in every aspect.

He made these remarks while presiding over a review meeting on the department's performance at the committee room of the Industries Department on Monday.

The meeting was attended by Managing Director of the Small Industries Development Board, Habibullah Arif, Additional Secretary for Industries, Rehan Gul Khattak, Deputy Secretary Aftab Khan, officials from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment & Trade and officers from the Directorate General of Industries & Commerce.

During the meeting, a comprehensive review of

the department's various sectors, set targets, and implementation progress was presented. The Special Assistant instructed the officials to further accelerate the department's responsibilities and services across multiple areas.

He was also informed on proposed measures to enhance transparency, good governance, and developmental initiatives within the department.

Country records lowest electricity production in 5 Years: Muzzammil

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief minister Khyber pakhtunkhwa Muzzammil Aslam, has expressed concerns over the federal government's claims of economic improvement.

Mr. Aslam stated that Pakistan has recorded its lowest electricity produc-

tion in February 2025 since February 2020, post-COVID-19. Moreover, the country's large-scale manufacturing (LSM) sector has seen a decline of 1.8% in the first seven months of the current fiscal year.

Aslam further emphasized that the LSM sector experienced a negative

growth of 1.2% in January alone.

He warned that the newly introduced gas tariff for captive power units may lead to a further decline in the coming months, reflecting a decrease in demand, purchasing power, and export competitiveness.

Mr. Aslam concluded

that the economy is on the verge of stagnation, despite the government's prediction of 3.1% growth for 2024-25.

However, he expressed doubts about achieving even 1% growth in the next fiscal year due to negative growth in large-scale manufacturing and agriculture.

Paramedics reject appointment of doctor in key faculty Position

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The President of the Paramedical Association at Naseerullah Khan Babar Memorial Hospital, Asif Akhunzada, has strongly opposed the appointment of a doctor as the Controller of Examination in the Faculty of Paramedical and Allied

Health Sciences, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He criticized the government for breaking its promises and completely rejected this decision.

Asif Akhunzada assured the Provincial Paramedical Association of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that the rights and protection of the paramedical community would not be compromised

under any circumstances.

He warned that if their demands were not met, they would launch a province-wide protest.

He further criticized the government's decision, calling it an injustice.

He accused the medical faculty of nepotism and gross incompetence, stating that such appointments were attempts to cover up

existing irregularities.

The paramedical association urged Advisor to Health Ahtesham Khan and Secretary Health to reconsider their decision. Akhunzada warned that failure to do so could result in severe backlash, including protests, a strike, and a complete boycott of services across the province.

Ramazan: A blessed month offering golden opportunity to quit smoking

PESHAWAR (APP): As millions of Muslims across the globe observe

Ramazan, the holy month of fasting, it is not just a time for spiritual reflection, prayer, and self-discipline but also a perfect opportunity to break free from harmful habits such as smoking, naswar addiction, and narcotic use.

This sacred month, renowned for its emphasis on self-restraint, patience and mindfulness, has become a beacon for many seeking to rid themselves of life-threatening addictions including heroine, hashish, cigarettes and naswar.

Medical professionals have highlighted how fasting during Ramazan plays a pivotal role in helping individuals conquer dependence on nicotine, naswar, and other substances.

According to Prof Dr Malik Riaz, a medical specialist at Government Hospital Pabbi Nowshera, the long hours of fasting aid in detoxifying the body, making it easier for individuals to quit harmful habits.

"When the body goes without food and water for extended periods, it begins a process of detoxification that can help individuals break free from their addictions," said Dr. Riaz.

The absence of smoking and snuff during the day, combined with the powerful motivation to maintain spiritual purity, helps to gradually diminish cravings. The holistic approach of Ramazan, focusing on both physical and mental well-being, significantly benefits those looking to

quit smoking or using other addictive substances.

As such, many use this blessed month to adopt healthier lifestyles, leaving behind cigarettes, naswar, and even narcotic substances.

For people grappling with addiction, Ramazan also sees an increase in participation in counseling and support groups. These programs, which help individuals quit smoking or naswar, often gain more traction during the holy month.

Zeeshan Khan, a 32-year-old resident of Nowshera district, is one of the many who have successfully quit naswar during Ramazan. He recounted how he had been addicted to naswar since 2010, initially using it as a way to cope with the stress of his MA exams. Despite numerous attempts to quit over the years, his addiction had led to significant dental problems, including the loss of a tooth. This Ramazan, however, he managed to overcome his addiction with the help of his determination and spiritual commitment.

"I have already lost a tooth due to continuous use of naswar, and I am relieved that I have quit this harmful habit," said Zeeshan. He expressed his regret over the negative impact of naswar on his personal and professional life, particularly the unpleasant habit of spitting that affected his social image.

Zeeshan's story highlights the physical, emotional, and social consequences of this addiction. Dental professionals

also weigh in on the dangers of naswar and declared that Ramazan was most ideal month to quit smoking.

Dr. Tahir Khan, a senior dental surgeon, noted that the extensive damage to Zeeshan's tooth required its extraction, as a root canal was not a viable option.

He emphasized that naswar's harmful effects extend far beyond oral health, leading to issues such as gum infections, jaw complications, and in some severe cases, even facial disfigurement. It also raises the risk of heart disease and oral cancers.

According to Dr. Tahir Khan, the link between naswar use and oral cancers is particularly alarming. Pakistan has one of the highest incidences of lip and oral cavity cancers, with around 11,000 new cases reported every year in men, making it the most common cancer type in the country.

The root causes, he said, include poor dental hygiene, tobacco use, viral infections, and, in some cases, the use of harmful substances like naswar and cigarettes.

Naswar remains prevalent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where approximately 70 percent of the population uses it without fully understanding the severe health consequences. This smokeless tobacco, often made from fresh tobacco leaves and various chemicals, contributes to a host of health problems, including cancers, respiratory issues, and cardiovascular diseases.

Despite these dangers, the demand for naswar,

particularly from regions like Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, and Mardan, remains high, with exports reaching neighboring provinces like Punjab and Sindh.

The economic impact of naswar is significant as well, with an estimated market value of around Rs 6 billion annually.

Dr. Muhammad Naeem, a former chairman of the Economics Department at the University of Peshawar, suggested that naswar should be brought under the tax net, similar to cigarettes, to curb its usage and increase awareness of its health risks.

In 2022, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government attempted to levy taxes on naswar, raising the tax to Rs 5 per kg, but this decision was later reversed due to public pressure. Nevertheless, the move highlighted the growing concern over the harmful impact of naswar on public health.

To tackle the rising addiction to drugs and naswar, the government has established 12 detoxification and rehabilitation centers across the province. These centers aim to help individuals struggling with addiction, offering treatment and support for those looking to break free from harmful habits.

Additionally, under the "Drugs Free Peshawar" program, naswar addicts are also being rehabilitated.

Syed Imran Shah, Director of the Social Welfare Department, stressed the importance of raising awareness about the dangers of naswar through mass media campaigns.



In brief

Meeting on law and order held F.P. Report

KOHAT: In view of the deteriorating law and order situation in the Karak District, an important high level meeting was held with Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah in the chair at his office on Monday. The meeting beside others was also attended by the Provincial Agriculture Minister Major® Muhammad Sajjad Barakwal, Chairman DDAC Karak Khurshid Khattak MPA, Mayor Tehsil Banda Daud Shah Inayat Khattak, DIG Kohat Abbas Majeed Marwat, Deputy Commissioner Karak Shakeel Ahmed Jan, DPO Karak and leaders of the Khattak Ittehad. The meeting reviewed in detail the various aspects of the law and order of Karak and certain important decisions were taken in this regard.

Commissioner Kohat Division directed the law enforcement agencies to use all resources to maintain the law and order in the Karak and sternly dealt with those who disturbing the peace. The elected leadership of Karak District declared that Karak is the most peaceful district of the province and no one will be allowed to destroy the ideal peace of the Karak. They assured their all-out support to the divisional as well as district administration in this regard.

Young man shot killed F.P. Report

LARKANA: Unknown gunman shot and killed a 30-year-old youth, Mudassar Manthar Jagirani, on the charge of alleged mischief in Sachi Bakhsh Jagirani, in the jurisdiction of Kanga police station. On the spot the mother of the killed person said that unknown armed men have killed my son under the accusation of having a relationship with a Jakhra caste woman's affairs. Protest in dokri against Cholistan canals hled: In the city of Dukri of district Larkana, against not setting the new price of wheat and drawing 6 canals over the Indus River, political and social organizations Sindh United Party, Sindhi Adabi Sangat, Taluka Bar Association, SABHA, Youth Social Union took out a protest rally from Ali Park in front of the press club. On this occasion Yasir Mangi, Advocate Altaf Khokhar, Irshad Baghio and others said that by taking out 6 canals from the Indus River, it is an attempt to damage the historical status of Sindh and the lakes, lush fields and ecosystems of the Indus Valley, which will not be tolerated in any way. Including farmers, settlers, workers, writers, poets.

Man kills daughter F.P. Report

BUREWALA: In the name of so-called honour, a man in Burewala on Monday shot dead his daughter and severely injured his niece for buying a pizza. An uncle of the victims who was later identified as Zubair said that the incident occurred when the infuriated father accused both girls of trying to elope, and later opened firing on them. The uncle further revealed that both girls were gone outside of their home to buy pizza from an outlet. Soon after receiving the report, local police reached the crime scene and shifted the dead and injured girls to local hospital. Police after registering a case started investigation. Honour killing is a practice wherein family members, primarily women, are punished, often fatally, for perceived transgressions against societal or familial expectations.

BISP to overcome gender based poverty

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Women's Wing Provincial President and Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), Rubina Khalid, stated that the PPP is a representative party for all segments of society. She emphasized that the BISP is a landmark initiative of the PPP government, aimed at providing financial assistance and welfare to the underprivileged, widows, and destitute women without any discrimination.

She expressed these views while addressing a joining ceremony organized by PPP Mardan Division at the residence of renowned social worker Naseem Akhtar, under the chairmanship of Divisional President Nawabzada Umar Farooq Khan Hoti. On this occasion, Naseem Akhtar, along with hundreds of her supporters, officially announced her inclusion in the PPP.

As the chief guest, Rubina Khalid welcomed the new female members

into the party by presenting them with PPP mufflers. She reiterated that the PPP is the true representative party of women and is committed to their progress through various programs and initiatives. She highlighted that the Benazir Income Support Program is a historic achievement of the PPP government, which has provided a vital safety net for widows, the poor, and the helpless, ensuring their fundamental rights.

Alleged embezzlement in health sector: The allegations made regarding financial irregularities at Mardan Medical Complex and Benazir Bhutto Children's Hospital is baseless and there is no truth in these reports. All the allegations made by the hospital on behalf of Karnal Dr. Gulzar are all fabricated and baseless. There is no truth in them.

Dr. Professor Amjad Ali is an honest and dutiful officer and his services are no less than a blessing to the institution. His identity has been targeted for unknown reasons, which is

very unfortunate. Dr. Amjad Ali is an expert officer in administrative matters, besides being associated with teaching and learning. All equipment for the Benazir Bhutto Children's Hospital has been purchased transparently under prevailing laws and in this process a sinister attempt has been made to spread rumors by giving a false impression of corruption and to tarnish the character of the project director, which is based on sheer malice. Quality equipment has been purchased for the hospital which is available in the hospital and the hospital is fully functional where medical facilities are being provided to the patients.

The allegation of transfer of Rs. 37.9 million to the personal account of the project director is ridiculous, fabricated and baseless. A defamation suit has already been filed in court against the said person for baseless allegations, defamation of the institution and character assassination of the project director.

Advocate Shazia Mir to contest Bar election



F.P. Report

PABBI: Advocate Shazia Mir Aftab, a distinguished lawyer at Peshawar High Court, is set to make history by becoming the first female lawyer to contest the Pabbi Bar Association elections. A member of a reputable family in Pabbi, Shazia will be running for the executive member post.

With the support of the majority of Pabbi Bar's lawyers, Shazia's chances of winning are looking promising. She is contesting the election on the platform of the Margari Wakilan, a subgroup of the Awami National Party.

Shazia has been a vocal advocate for human rights and social justice, making her a well-respected figure in the community. As the only female lawyer in Pabbi, her participation in the elections is a significant milestone.

The annual elections of the Pabbi Bar Association are scheduled to take place on April 5, 2025. Shazia's campaign is gaining momentum, with the support of Margari Wakilan lawyers, non-partisan lawyers from Pabbi Bar, and the People's Lawyers Forum. Her dedication to social and human rights issues has earned her widespread recognition, making her a strong contender for the executive member position.

Petrol pump salesman killed

Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: In two separate incidents, one person was killed and another injured. Police have registered separate cases and initiated investigations in this regard, on Monday.

In the first incident, unknown individuals shot and killed a petrol pump employee in the Khweshgi area of Nowshera. The culprits fled the scene.

Mohammad Sadiq, son of Noor Shah Khan, a resident of Jhanda Khel Khweshgi, filed a report with the police stating that his brother, Mohammad Arif Wahab, son of Latif Khan, was working as a salesperson at the petrol pump. He left for work after Iftar and was later found dead in the pump's room.

In the second incident, a man was injured in the Rashakai area of Nowshera.

Zulfiqar, son of Islam Gul, a resident of Usmanabad, filed a report with the police stating that he was shot and injured by Paienda Khan, son of Ahmad Shah, a resident of Usmanabad, who fired at him with the intention of killing him.

JI calls for equal care for orphaned children



F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami district chief and former MNA Maulana Asadullah has said that it is the responsibility of an Islamic welfare state to ensure orphaned children receive the same care, love, and opportunities as any other child in society.

He made these remarks during a speech at an Iftar dinner organized by the Aghosh Al-Khidmat Gulabad Center, an orphanage. The event, held in observance of World Orphan Day, was attended by JI local leaders, volunteers from the Al-Khidmat Foundation, orphans residing at the center, and community elders.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Bashir Khan, was the chief guest for the occasion. The Al-Khidmat Foundation central leader Fazal Mehmood, ADC Bashir Khan, Aghosh Gulabad in-charge Saeedullah, JI tehsil chief Maulana Javed Iqbal and others.

The speakers emphasized that the care and well-being of orphaned children must be a priority for society as a whole. Orphans, they pointed out, are especially vulnerable due to the loss of parental support and guidance. In a welfare state, every effort should be made to ensure that these children are provided with not only basic needs like food and shelter but also emotional support, education, and access to healthcare, just as any other child would receive in a loving family environment.

Maulana Asadullah stressed that Islam places great significance on the welfare of orphaned children, urging society to treat them with compassion and responsibility. "Orphaned children should not be viewed as a burden but as individuals who deserve our collective care and attention," he said. He called for coordinated efforts between government agencies, NGOs, and the

broader community to create a support system that nurtures these children and gives them a chance for a bright future.

Speakers further highlighted the role of organizations like the Al-Khidmat Foundation, which has been at the forefront of providing welfare services to marginalized groups, especially orphans. The foundation's ongoing efforts in securing a better future for these children include offering them quality education, access to healthcare, and psychological counseling, all aimed at helping them grow into well-rounded individuals who can contribute meaningfully to society.

In line with this, ADC Bashir Khan announced a donation of 50,000 rupees from the district administration for the Aghosh Al-Khidmat Gulabad Center. The donation is part of the district administration's continuous support for the care of orphaned children in the region. Additionally, community leaders gathered at the center to break their fast with the orphans, offering not just financial support but also emotional encouragement.

Saeedullah, the center's in-charge, mentioned that the Aghosh Al-Khidmat Gulabad Center organizes this special event every year on the 15th of Ramadan to raise awareness about the importance of supporting orphaned children. This occasion, which is intended to be both a spiritual and communal gathering, encourages the community to become actively involved in the care and protection of orphans.

The event concluded with a shared commitment to expanding the scope of care for orphaned children, ensuring they are integrated into a loving and supportive environment, and advocating for their rights to a fulfilling and prosperous future.

Jirga holds meeting in Torkham

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: To resume the Torkham border for general crossing, the Pakistan and Afghanistan jirga members hold a meeting on Monday, at zero point in the Afghan side of Torkham, postponed previously owing to miscommunication.

The 36 members of jirga comprising tribal elders, ulemas, traders and representatives of Clearing Agent Association, Torkham and Khyber Chambers of Commerce and Industry led by Tehsil Chairman Shah Khalid crossed the border to Afghanistan.

The Afghan business community members, elders and border officials resumed the representative jirga at the crossing where from they were taken to Afghan custom to initiate the meeting.

Pakistan jirga head Tehsil Chairman Shah Khalid after attending the moot and returning back said that previously the Afghan jirga had been informed of three Terms of Reference (TOR) i.e. to hold cease fire at the border, stop construction work at post in disputed site and resume the border for pedestrian as well as for traffic movement.

The Afghan jirga agreed

on ceasefire and commencement of the border but on halting building of post at prohibited sought a day time to convince its respective government, he added.

Shah Khalid maintained that the jirga was held in a friendly atmosphere and hopefully an affirmative message will be received from the Afghan government.

It is to be mentioned here that the Torkham border has remained suspended for the last 24 days due to quarrel, erupted between Pak-Afghan border forces on construction of a post by the Afghans in a prohibited area.

One killed in road accident

F.P. Report

FAISALABAD (INP): A man killed while two others sustained serious injuries in a road accident in the area of Tandlianwala police station.

Rescue 1122 spokesman said that a speeding car hit

a tractor trolley from opposite direction near Katho Bhattian Stop on Tandlianwala canal road on late Sunday night. The accident occurred as head lights of tractor trolley were reportedly not on due to which the car driver could not assess the tractor trolley.

As a result, Amir(40) r/o Chak No.435-GB died on the spot whereas Rescue 1122 shifted Irfan(35) and Abdul Aziz(25) to Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital Tandlianwala for treatment. Further investigation was underway.

Media playing critical role in public awareness

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The media has a vital role to play in advancing the population management agenda in Pakistan, particularly in addressing the challenges posed by rapid population growth—a major hurdle to national progress and development. This was the central theme of the National Media Coalition Meeting on Harnessing Media for Positive Social Change, organized by the Population Council with the support of UNFPA. Journalists from leading media outlets across Pakistan participated, emphasizing the media's power to shape public discourse, and policy action.

In his welcome remarks, Dr. Ali Mir, Senior Director, Population Council, stressed the urgency of tackling Pakistan's rapid population growth, which threatens economic stability, resource distribution, and the country's ability to meet its development goals. He highlighted the increasing strain on public services such as health-

care, education, and employment, underscoring the need for collective action. "The media has the power to inform, educate, and influence public perception, ultimately driving policies that promote sustainable population growth. By shedding light on key issues, journalists can mobilize action and help address the challenges posed by an expanding population," he stated.

Ikrum ul Ahad, Deputy Manager Communication, Population Council, spoke about the global impact of media in shaping social change. "Media has played a transformative role worldwide by influencing policy discourse, challenging misconceptions, and amplifying critical issues. In Pakistan, its dynamic presence offers a unique opportunity to advocate for evidence-based policymaking, raise awareness about population growth, and promote family planning initiatives," he noted.

Ali Mazhar Choudhary, Director Communication, Population Council, led a session on effectively mainstream-

ing the population agenda through media. Coalition members worked on a strategic plan to advance the narrative of sustainable population growth, identifying key focus areas for media coverage. These included the links between rapid population growth and climate change, women's empowerment, female education, the integration of population welfare indicators in the NFC Award, political will, the role of Lady Health Workers (LHWs) in family planning, and incorporating family planning services into social protection networks.

Ikrum Junaidi, Senior Reporter at Daily Dawn, shared insights on the challenges journalists face in reporting population-related issues and provided recommendations for overcoming them. "Journalists must navigate editorial priorities and political sensitivities, yet their role in spotlighting critical social issues remains indispensable. Consistent and well-researched reporting can drive public awareness and policy action on population challenges," he

emphasized.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Ghulam Farid Khan, Programme Analyst at UNFPA, commended the coalition's efforts in equipping media professionals with the tools to hold policymakers accountable. "The media plays a pivotal role in fostering transparency and accountability by exposing gaps in service delivery, resource allocation, and policy execution. Through responsible journalism, we can advocate for solutions to Pakistan's pressing population challenges and contribute to a more sustainable future," he concluded.

Education a hope for hopeless people: The United Nations recognizes education as a fundamental human right for every child. Moreover, Article 25-A of the Constitution also guarantees the right to free and compulsory education for children between the ages of five and sixteen.

Unfortunately, Balochistan - Pakistan's poverty-hit province, has a high percentage of out-of-school children due to insufficient educational budget, lack of facilities, poverty, and gender

inequity.

In fact, education has always been a cornerstone of human development. Its significance has grown exponentially in this modern era of science and technology, but due to high inflation rates and a lack of facilities; children, particularly in rural areas, are still deprived of their basic right to education.

Luckily, an educational institution called 'Hope Schooling System' has recently been established in the Walma area on the outskirts of the Zhob district in the northern part of Balochistan. More than half of the children getting education here are orphans or those whose head-of-mouth parents are unable to afford the educational expenses.

Abdullah Sherani, the principal of 'Hope Schooling System', says when orphans, destitute, and poor children are not provided free education, it results in the deprivation of their fundamental right, and an increase in the already alarming drop-out rate.

He says the 'Hope Schooling System' is a non-profit entity,

but it is aimed at promoting free education in a far-off region of Balochistan. The school owner terms the institution a ray of hope for the poor and unfortunate children from the underprivileged community, where lack of education often makes the children vulnerable to child labor.

"The number of private educational institutions in Balochistan is around 30,000, while the number in the Zhob valley is about 100. If each educational institute enrolls only 40 children free of charge, 120K children deprived of education will be able to get education across Balochistan," he suggests, adding "the high drop-out rate is in Balochistan with over 3 million out-of-school children," he laments.

It is worth mentioning that a school enrollment campaign is underway across Balochistan that aims at raising awareness among the parents to get their children enrolled and persuade the teachers to ensure their presence at government-run schools. The campaign is also expected to reduce the drop-out rate.

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In other words, we must all come together to protect children from the horrors of war, reverse this deadly "new normal" of attacks against children, and preserve our shared humanity.

— *China Daily*

ing to create chaos within Pakistan. The international community, including the United Nations, has condemned the kidnapping and terrorism linked to the Jaafar Express attack in clear terms, yet decisive actions against those direct-

The sooner we recognize that India is not just an unfriendly neighbor but a long-term adversary with expansionist ambitions, the better prepared we will be to safeguard Pakistan's sovereignty and national interests.

The world must not accept the ‘new normal’ in Palestine

WHEN I returned to my hometown near Ramallah in the occupied West Bank in January, the tension was palpable. It reminded me of the second Intifada, which I witnessed firsthand as a child. There was fear and anxiety and an increased sense of uncertainty due to constant attacks by Israeli settlers. Roads to and from the town were blocked by checkpoints, leading to hours-long waits and humiliation for Palestinians trying to enter or leave.

Weeks before I visited, Israeli settlers had set fire to my family's land during the olive-picking season. This followed a similar attack last summer and two more the year before, which had destroyed property, crops, and ancient olive trees.

My father told me he stood powerless, unable to extinguish the fire as the armed settlers were protected by Israeli forces. Even if the soldiers hadn't been there to prevent any action to save the property, there would not have been enough water available to put out the fire because it is diverted by nearby illegal settlements.

The situation across the occupied West Bank has been worsening for years, but violence escalated sharply after October 7, 2023. Nearly half of all Palestinian children killed by Israeli forces or settlers since records began were killed in just the past two years.

So far this year, that violence has seen a two-year-old shot in the head by an Israeli sniper inside her family home, and a 23-year-old pregnant woman killed by Israeli fire. These are not isolated incidents, but part of a broader pattern where

Palestinians are killed in unprecedented ways, at unprecedented rates.

Israeli military raids on Palestinian homes and arbitrary detention have become a daily occurrence. Of the 10,000 Palestinians lingering in Israeli prisons, more than 300 are children, most of whom face no charge and have no way of knowing if or when they will see their families again.

So far this year, that violence has seen a two-year-old shot in the head by an Israeli sniper inside her family home, and a 23-year-old pregnant woman killed by Israeli fire. These are not isolated incidents, but part of a broader pattern where Palestinians are killed in unprecedented ways, at unprecedented rates. Israeli military raids on Palestinian homes and arbitrary detention have become a daily occurrence. Of the 10,000 Palestinians lingering in Israeli prisons, more than 300 are children, most of whom face no charge and have no way of knowing if or when they will see their families again. Villages are attacked, homes are demolished, and property is destroyed at accelerated rates. The architecture of occupation — checkpoints, barriers, and permits — has intensified and made daily life unbearable for Palestinians. Nearly 900 new military checkpoints and barriers have been installed since October 7. This has led to severe movement restrictions and disruptions to essential services, deepening an already dire humanitarian crisis. What was once unprecedented has become “routine” — and the world seems to be getting used to it. Our new reality includes Israeli air strikes on refugee camps, hospitals under siege, children shot in front of their homes. Such incidents of brutal violence have become regular occurrences, just like in Gaza.

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Mohamad Alasmar

have become regular occurrences, just like in Gaza.

Remember the first hospital attack in Gaza? The first targeting of a school sheltering the displaced? The first fire from an Israeli air strike tearing through tents of the displaced and burning people alive? Now try to remember the last one. Such violent incidents have

award, Palestinian filmmaker Basel Adra expressed his hope that his infant daughter would not have to live the same life that he was currently living — always fearing settler violence, home demolitions and forced displacement. Despite the film winning the highest accolades (or perhaps because of it), the attacks by Israeli sol-

diers and settlers on Masafer Yatta, Adra's community, have only intensified. There has been no meaningful action from the international community about it.

People can be forgiven for being overwhelmed in the face of relentless brutality taking place for more than a year and a half now. It's only human to feel numb. Besides, so many people have been exposed to media coverage that has systematically dehumanised Palestinians and sidelined their voices, severing human connection and empathy.

But governments cannot be forgiven for taking no action. They have a legal obligation to uphold international law. Its norms are not relative; they are not up for negotiation. The truth is that the shocking violations taking

tary.

Accepting the normalised because they are being accepted by those entrusted to uphold the norms of international law.

We must demand that international bodies and governments take concrete steps to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. This includes suspending arms transfers and supporting mechanisms that challenge impunity for those who flout international law.

The global community must act decisively to restore respect for international law. States that ignore these laws undermine the very foundation of a rules-based global order. While those who violate children's rights and international law bear ultimate responsibility, all member states of the United Nations have a duty under the Geneva Conventions to ensure adherence to these principles.

Weekly massacres are not normal. A population brought to the brink of a man-made famine is not normal. Air strikes on refugee camps are not normal. A two-tier system of rights based on ethnicity is not normal. Detaining, imprisoning and killing children is not normal.

The time for passive observation has passed. The world must demand accountability, support humanitarian efforts, and refuse to accept the unacceptable. Every delay costs more lives; every delay weakens the system designed to keep people across the world safe. Only through collective action can we break this cycle of violence and ensure a future where children in Palestine and Israel, regardless of their ethnicity or religion, are protected and valued.

White House denies ignoring court order halting

Stephen Collinson

THE White House is denying that it violated a judge's order Saturday to halt the deportations of alleged Venezuelan gang members to El Salvador, which, if it did occur, would take legal showdowns over the administration's claims of vast presidential power closer to the edge of a constitutional crisis.

The drama surrounds Venezuelan migrants expelled with the rare use of an 18th-century law — the Alien Enemies Act — another controversial decision and one that may represent overreach by President Donald Trump.

US District Judge James Boasberg temporarily blocked the deportations to consider the implications of using the act — and said in court that any planes already in the air carrying migrants should return to the US. But the administration announced on Sunday that 250 deportees that it said were affiliated with the Tren de Aragua gang were in El Salvadorian custody.

A carefully worded statement by White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt on Sunday evening only deepened intrigue over whether officials defied the judge.

“The Administration did not ‘refuse to comply’ with a court order. The order, which had no lawful basis, was issued after terrorist (Tren de Aragua) aliens had already been removed from U.S. territory,” Leavitt said.

“A single judge in a single city cannot direct the movements of an aircraft carrier full of foreign alien terrorists who were physically expelled from U.S. soil,” she added.

A distinction Leavitt made about the judge's “written” order, and the fact she noted the migrants had left US soil but did not say when in the timeline they arrived in El Salvador, seem significant. Her use of the phrase “aircraft carrier” is confusing, however. And White Houses don't have the power to decree whether court orders are lawful.

As he flew back to Washington on Sunday night after a weekend in Florida, Trump defended his administration's actions but dodged a question on whether the judge's instructions had been followed.

“I can tell you this, these were bad people. That was a bad group of, as I say, hom-bres,” he said. But asked whether his government violated court orders he replied: “You'd have to speak to the lawyers about that.”

The exact timing of Boasberg's orders and how they correspond to the deportation operation is not yet clear. But if the administration defied the judge, it would potentially create the most serious legal quagmire of the administration so far and would fuel fears that an authoritarian presidency could openly defy the rule of law.

Attorneys from the ACLU/Democracy Forward asked Boasberg in an overnight filing into Monday to “seek immediate clarification” in sworn declarations, about the conduct of officials regarding his orders. They want to know whether flights with migrants took off after the judge's written or oral instructions were issued and whether flights subject to them landed or were in the air and whether those expelled were handed to a foreign country after he ordered the temporary halt.

In a separate case, a judge in Boston will hold a hearing Monday into whether Customs and Border Protection officials willfully disobeyed his order blocking the removal of a Rhode Island doctor, Reuters reported. Dr. Rasha Alawieh, 34, a Brown University assistant professor and US visa holder was deported to Lebanon after returning from a trip to visit relatives in the country.

The drama points to a trend.

Trump is wielding huge power now. This leaves those who might constrain him — including the courts and his political opponents — to ask questions later, after his actions have wrought almost irrevocable change.

The invocation of the Alien Enemies Act to speed up deportations is a significant step, as it is meant to be limited to use in wartime.

Meanwhile, a crackdown on student protests highlighted by the arrest of a Palestinian green card holder is being justified on the grounds that his anti-Israel views hurt US foreign policy interests — but critics see an attempt to crush First Amendment rights and dis-

sent in education by a White House untamed by the Constitution.

Trump's sudden shutdown of the taxpayer-funded international radio and television service Voice of America over the weekend, meanwhile, renewed debate over whether he has the power to unilaterally ignore spending authorized in laws passed by Congress and followed his chilling claims on Friday that media outlets that do not promote his MAGA views are “corrupt and illegal.”

Millions of voters sent Trump to Washington to destroy institutions that they believe do not reflect their culture, values, and material interests. And polls show that among his supporters, Trump's actions are popular.

His mantra is to act fast, since limits on presidential power are mostly retrospective — meaning that Trump can get the desired results before he can be stopped. A government department, for example, can be dismantled beyond repair by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency even if a judge subsequently orders fired workers, programs and funding to be restored.

The 1798 Alien Enemies Act has resulted in abuses that stained American history. It tarnished the reputation of the second president — John Adams — and was used to justify the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

The text of the law says that it can be invoked whenever a war is declared between the United States and “any foreign nation or government” or when “an Invasion or predatory incursion is perpetrated, attempted, or threatened against the territory of the United States by any foreign nation or government” and the president makes a proclamation to that effect.

But the United States is not at war with Venezuela, and while Trump has frequently claimed the country is subject to an “invasion” by undocumented migrants, criminals and gang members, Congress — not the president — has the constitutional responsibility to declare war. So, the question immediately became whether Trump went beyond the powers of the law and his office with the deportations.

Boasberg's temporary restraining order was meant to create time to allow these critical legal arguments to play out.

South Dakota Republican Sen. Mike Rounds told CNN's Jake Tapper on “State of the Union” Sunday that he didn't know whether the administration had ignored the judge's order to block the deportations. But he added: “We expect the executive branch to follow the law. We have said in the past that we will follow the law ... we are a constitutional republic, and we will follow those laws.”

Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced on Sunday on X that over 250 “alien enemy members of Tren de Aragua” had been sent to El Salvador to be held “in their very good jails at a fair price.” The US is paying \$6 million for their accommodation.

The timing of the various court orders and the deportations is now at issue.

Boasberg had initially blocked the administration from deporting five individuals who lodged a legal challenge. After a later hearing, he broadened his action to cover all noncitizens in US custody subject to Trump's proclamation. Attorney General Pam Bondi and other top DOJ officials argued in a Sunday filing that “some gang members” were deported between Boasberg's two orders on Saturday. They said the five initial plaintiffs were not removed. The administration has already appealed the judge's moves.

The case is significant beyond the judge's instructions.

International law generally prohibits the deporting of individuals to places where they could face persecution. The brutal, crowded conditions faced by inmates in El Salvador could meet that threshold. And the government of President Nayib Bukele — whom Trump officials frequently praise — stands accused of constitutional and human rights abuses that infringe most understandings of American foreign policy values in recent decades.

Then there are the concerns about why Trump is using the notorious Alien Enemies act at all, given that other mechanisms exist to expel gang members. The

administration's lack of transparency about the identities of those it deported could also raise the possibility that undocumented migrants who are not gang members are being deprived of their legal rights, swept up in the purge and sent to a grim fate in El Salvador's custody.

“Giving them this wide latitude to just ... claim that anybody is anything is wrong,” Texas Democratic Rep Jasmine Crockett told Tapper. “We do have courts, we do have processes, we do have laws, and we should just go ahead and use those.”

But the political benefits for Trump of acting with strongman zeal are obvious and allow him to imply that anyone who questions his actions are siding with vicious criminals who no one wants in the United States.

“Thank you to El Salvador and, in particular, President Bukele, for your understanding of this horrible situation, which was allowed to happen to the United States because of incompetent Democrat leadership,” the president wrote on Truth Social on Sunday.

The administration is also facing questions over the handling of the detention of former Columbia University student Mahmoud Khalil, a Palestinian refugee whose green card was revoked over his involvement in the last year's protests over the Israel-Hamas war.

Was Khalil arrested for activities that could legally be categorized as material support for a terrorist organization, or is he being held in infringement of his First Amendment rights as a legal permanent resident of the United States? His supporters say he was targeted purely for speaking up against Israel's onslaught against Gaza after the October 7 attacks in 2023.

But Rubio argued on CBS “Face the Nation” on Sunday that it was “very simple” to see that Khalil had lied when applying for a green card about his future political activities that included taking part in pro-Hamas events. “We never should have allowed him in, in the first place. If he had told us, ‘I’m going over there and I’m going over there to become the spokesperson and one of the leaders of a movement that’s going to turn one of your allegedly elite colleges upside down’ — people can’t even go to school, library buildings being vandalized — we never would have let him in,” Rubio said. The secretary of state repeated his contention that Khalil's activity ran “counter to the foreign policy interest of the United States of America.”

US law states that anyone who “endorses or espouses terrorist activities or persuades others to do so” is ineligible for a visa to enter the country. But the coming case is likely to partly focus on whether those prohibitions apply to a legal permanent resident already in the United States.

Rubio didn't provide evidence in the interview that Khalil had committed a crime or had materially supported a terrorist group or espoused terrorism. If Khalil was merely voicing support for Hamas in a general sense — no matter how vile that might seem to many Americans — he may be regarded to be exercising his right to free speech, which is protected by the Constitution, and which cannot be constrained by the government.

This case has caused deep concern because it raises the possibility that any immigrant who is not a citizen could be arrested and deported if they say things that the president or his government unilaterally decide are contrary to the interests of US foreign policy.

Khalil's case is also being litigated in the courts. A federal judge has blocked his deportation, and he remains in Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody. Like the matter of the alleged Venezuelan gang members, the case seems destined to end up in the Supreme Court — which will face an unprecedented flurry of cases that will define both this administration and the presidency in future.

All the cases contain this question in one form or the other: Does Trump have the vast authority that he's assigned to himself in the most aggressive attempt to wield power in the history of the modern presidency?

The president isn't waiting for the results. He's bent on forging deep changes to American governance, values and culture that will be hard for any future president or Congress to reverse.

The Arab plan for Gaza has two problems: Israel and the PA

EGYPT'S proposal for the reconstruction and administration of Gaza has emerged as an urgent intervention in the crisis that has unfolded since October 7, 2023. Backed by the Arab states, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and several European nations, the plan is not merely a humanitarian initiative — it is a geopolitical manoeuvre meant to counter the scheme being pushed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and recently backed by United States President Donald Trump, to depopulate the Gaza Strip.

For several months, Arab states hesitated to step into the role of rebuilding and governing Gaza without a comprehensive initiative to address the core issue of Palestinian statelessness. Effectively, they were resisting being drawn into the role of a Palestinian Authority (PA) 2.0, shouldering Israel's responsibilities as an occupying force while Israelis continued their colonial expansion in the West Bank. Yet, the existential threat posed by Trump and Netanyahu's vision for Gaza has forced them into action.

At its core, Egypt's \$53bn reconstruction plan relies on the establishment of a local steering committee composed of technocrats for the first six months, with a transition to PA control thereafter. But this approach carries fundamental problems that could doom the plan to failure before it is even implemented.

Netanyahu's obstructionism

The Israeli prime minister has been clear in his opposition to any role for the PA in Gaza. His stance is strategic: allowing the PA to administer the territory would open the door for geopolitical unity between Gaza and the West Bank, a stepping stone to renew negotiations for a Palestinian state.

For decades, Netanyahu and Israel's political estab-

lishment have worked to prevent any scenario that could lead to Palestinian self-determination. The status quo of fragmentation and division between Palestinian territories serves their interests, keeping the goal of statehood perpetually out of reach.

To effectively counter Netanyahu, the Arab states need the buy-in of as many other actors as possible, especially the Trump administration, which has the leverage to force the Israeli premier to accept.

While Netanyahu may still seek to undermine its implementation through imposing bureaucratic hurdles, military escalations, or economic restrictions —

Beyond Israeli resistance, there is another major barrier to implementing the Arab plan: the PA. Under President Mahmoud Abbas, it is a deeply unpopular institution, lacking political relevance after the collapse of the Oslo Accords. Over the years, Abbas has accelerated the erosion of its legitimacy by continuing security coordination with Israel, deepening his authoritarian rule, and refusing to hold elections since 2006. His leadership has been increasingly defined by repression — of opposition factions, of political renewal, and of any resistance to Israeli aggression. Without a viable political process, the PA has become an appendage of Israel's occupation and apartheid, enforcing security in the West Bank while lacking any real authority to govern as an independent entity. This has fuelled widespread Palestinian disillusionment. Abbas's grip on power has necessitated an increasingly heavy hand, particularly against activists and factions calling for a more confrontational approach to Israeli policies of ethnic cleansing. The PA's failure has been especially glaring in the past 16 months of Israel's genocidal assaults on Gaza and the West Bank.

part of a well-worn Israeli playbook — the Arab plan remains the best option on the table to prevent the ethnic cleansing of Gaza through renewed warfare and long-term deprivation.

A PA in crisis

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Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

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The PA's failure has been especially glaring in the past 16 months of Israel's genocidal assaults on Gaza and the West Bank. Abbas

eliminated financial support for families of Palestinians imprisoned, killed, or wounded by Israel. This move, breaking a longstanding social compact between the Palestinian people and their leadership, has only underscored the extent to which the PA seeks to appease Israel and the West at the expense of legitimacy at home.

Now, faced with an urgent need for Palestinian governance in Gaza, the Arab states find themselves without a real, viable partner. The existing PA leadership is weak, corrupt, and likely incapable of administering the Strip effectively.

Some within the Arab world, as well as Palestinian civil society and the diaspora, are pushing for new leadership. However, Abbas and his loyalists have resisted any such efforts. In mid-February, the PA prevented 33 delegates to a Palestinian national conference being held in Doha — which was billed as a grassroots effort to revive the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) — from leaving the West Bank.

At the same time, in a bid to accommodate Arab government opposition, Abbas has extended an amnesty offer to disaffected members of Fatah, particularly Mohammed Dahlan, his UAE-backed rival who has lived in exile in Abu Dhabi.

Dahlan's potential return could signal a shift in Palestinian leadership dynamics, but it would not

solve the core crisis of legitimacy afflicting the PA. A political reshuffling at the top is not the same as systemic reform, and without a broader commitment to national unity and representational renewal, any new leadership structure risks inheriting the same failures that have defined Abbas's tenure.

A moment of opportunity The reconstruction of Gaza presents an opportunity to lay the groundwork for a renewed Palestinian national movement by breaking Abbas's stranglehold over Palestinian politics and jumpstarting the process of its revitalisation. If the Arab states can navigate the political minefield of Netanyahu's intransigence, Abbas's self-interest, and internal Palestinian divisions, they might be able to steer Gaza towards a more stable and autonomous future.

However, if Abbas and his circle of entrenched officials remain in control, this effort could quickly devolve into another failed attempt at Palestinian reconciliation, reinforcing the status quo of Israeli dominance and Palestinian disunity. Gaza's future hangs in the balance. This intervention by Arab states could be a positive step towards Palestinian self-determination — or it could become a historic missed opportunity. If Abbas continues to monopolise power, if the PLO remains a hollow shell, and if Netanyahu continues his campaign to sabotage any form of Palestinian sovereignty, then the Arab plan may be dead on arrival.

This moment calls for decisive action, for Palestinian political renewal, and for an international commitment to genuine Palestinian self-determination. Whether the Arab states' plan can overcome the structural obstacles in its path remains to be seen. But if the Palestinians' leadership crisis has not already sealed Gaza's fate, then now is the time for a course correction before it is too late.



Pakistan's trade deficit declines in FY24, says Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Monday informed the National Assembly that Pakistan's trade deficit has declined from USD 27.47 billion in FY23 to USD 24.11 billion in FY24, attributed to decreasing imports and rising exports.

Responding to questions during the National Assembly's question hour, he said that Pakistan's trade deficit slightly widened to USD 10.4 billion in the first two quarters of FY2024-25 (July-December), compared to USD 10.3 billion during the same period of the previous fiscal year.

The minister said that Pakistan's imports exceeded USD 5 billion in December 2024, reaching USD 5.2 billion. This increase pushed the monthly trade deficit beyond USD 2 billion, standing at USD 2.35 billion in December 2024.

He attributed the rise in imports to the ongoing economic recovery, with both the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) revising Pakistan's growth projections upward for FY25 to 3.0% and 3.2%, respectively. The uptick in imports reflects revived industrial activity, with several key sectors experiencing growth.

In December FY25, compared to the same month in FY24, imports of power generation and transmission equipment—such as solar panels, transformers, and converters—increased by 60%, reaching USD 319 million.

Similarly, industrial machinery and equipment imports rose by 20%, while imports of textile industrial machinery surged by 40%, indicating an expansion in production capacity.

Imports of auto parts for heavy vehicles and trailers

climbed by 58%, reflecting growth in the transport and logistics sectors. Additionally, imports of heavy equipment and parts more than doubled, registering a 109% increase.

This broad-based rise in industrial imports underscores the growing demand for infrastructure and production-related equipment, driven by economic expansion and improved business sentiment.

The surge in imports has also supported rising domestic demand, encouraged by declining inflation and lower interest rates.

The minister emphasized that Pakistan relies on an export enhancement strategy to bridge its trade deficit. He noted that various initiatives led by the Ministry of Commerce had contributed to narrowing the deficit and achieving export targets.

He highlighted several initiatives, including the

final stages of the Pakistan-Gulf Cooperation Council Free Trade Agreement (Pak-GCC FTA) negotiations, the completion of the biennial review of the European Union's GSP Plus status, and the operationalization of Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) with Türkiye, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan. Transit Trade Agreements with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are also operational, while 14 protocols in the food and agriculture sector have been signed with China.

Finalization of the PTA with Afghanistan is underway through stakeholder consultations. A proposal for the expansion of the FTA with China has been finalized in consultation with trade bodies. Reviews of trade agreements with Malaysia and Indonesia are in progress. The SME Internationalization and Export Readiness Programme is also being pursued

in collaboration with the Milan Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

South Korea's Trade Minister, Inkyu Cheong, has outlined an ambitious plan to relocate Korea's industrial base from its Northeast Asian neighbors to Pakistan, following the signing of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the two countries.

In May 2024, Pakistan and Cambodia agreed to establish a joint trade committee to enhance trade and investment, comprising top business associations from both nations. Additionally, in November 2024, Pakistan and Belarus strengthened their bilateral relations by signing 15 significant agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs).

For trade promotion, the minister said that under the "Look Africa" policy, four country exhibitions were held in Kenya, South

Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt, with Ethiopia scheduled for January 2025. International exhibitions, including the Engineering and Healthcare Show, FoodAg, and TEXPO 2024, have been organized.

Business-to-business (B2B) engagements, under government patronage, are ongoing with Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Uzbekistan, China, Belarus, and Malaysia. The "Rebranding Pakistan" initiative aims to enhance governance through digital platforms. Efforts are being made to maximize the performance of Trade Officers through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and a digital portal for monitoring.

The preparation of the National Horticulture Policy is underway. Discussions with the US Trade Representative are ongoing to secure market access for Pakistani mangoes, fresh dates, beef, and the renewal

of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

Pakistan has also initiated trade dialogue with the United Kingdom to consolidate and enhance Pakistan's market share post-Brexit. The Ministry of Commerce, in collaboration with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), is working to boost agricultural exports. Active collaboration with foreign missions and embassies of trading partners in Pakistan is also being pursued to explore export opportunities.

The creation of the Pakistan Land and Port Authority is underway to facilitate trade at land border crossing points.

The rejuvenation of the National Trade and Transport Facilitation Committee and the formulation of Pakistan's Trans-shipment Policy are also in progress.

The Pakistan Institute of Trade and Development

(PITAD) is strengthening the capacity of Commerce Ministry officers, with a Head of Research appointed to build in-house research capabilities for data-driven initiatives. The National Tariff Commission is actively engaged in safeguard measures to protect Pakistan's export interests in overseas markets.

Under the National Tariff Policy 2019-24, four budget exercises have been completed, with 6,500 tariff lines rationalized and 2,198 tariff lines reduced to zero duty, providing over Rs. 92 billion in relief to industry and trade.

For Budget FY24-25, pre-budget seminars were held, stakeholder consultations conducted, tariff proposals analyzed, and rationalization recommended by the Tariff Policy Board. The Ministry has drafted and presented the second Tariff Policy (2025-29) for stakeholder input.

Afiniti, Finance Minister discuss AI expansion

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb here on Monday met with a delegation from Afiniti, a leading AI technology firm, to discuss the company's expanding business operations in Pakistan.

The meeting, held at the Finance Division, focused on issues related to taxation, talent recruitment, and the growth of the IT sector in Pakistan. According to press release issued by finance ministry, the delegation was led by Jerome Vaughan Kapelus, CEO of Afiniti Software Solutions Pvt Ltd, and included Wedley Howard Fink, CFO of Afiniti, Osman Asghar Khan, MD & GM of Afiniti Pakistan, and Fakhar Ejaz, Senior Vice President of

Global HR at Afiniti.

The meeting focused on discussions regarding Afiniti's expanding business operations in Pakistan, the recruitment of talent, and associated issues related to the taxation structure.

Jerome Vaughan Kapelus shared details about Afiniti's operations, noting that nearly 80 percent of its operational support team is based in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. He highlighted the company's growth over the years, with its customer base now spanning North America, Europe, and other regions globally.

Kapelus also spoke highly of the talent pool in Pakistan, particularly engineers, computer scientists, and technologists, expressing that Afiniti's experience in recruiting high-quality human resources in the country had been exceptional. He emphasized that Afiniti was "thrilled" with the caliber of talent available in Pakistan, which has contributed significantly to the company's success.

On the occasion, Aurangzeb expressed his

appreciation for Afiniti's growth and its continued investment in Pakistan. He noted that information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services, along with agriculture, represent major growth sectors for Pakistan, with the unique advantage that much of the input for these sectors remains local.

He assured the delegation that the government is committed to creating an enabling ecosystem for both IT and agriculture to thrive. He briefed the delegation on a range of taxation reforms aimed at modernizing the tax system through the use of people-processed technology and end-to-end digitalization. He stressed the government's goal of broadening the tax base, including bringing previously non-compliant sectors into the tax net. This, he explained, would provide greater space for sectors that are over-taxed, such as the salaried class and manufacturing sectors.

Additionally, Minister Aurangzeb provided an update on the government's efforts to simplify the tax

return process. He highlighted the reduction in the number of fields in the tax return forms for the salaried class, which is expected to encourage greater participation in the tax system. The Minister mentioned that the new simplified tax return system would be operational by September, ahead of the next tax filing season.

The minister also briefed the delegation about the launch of the Pakistan Crypto Council, a new initiative aimed at regulating and integrating blockchain technology and digital assets into the country's financial landscape. This initiative, he explained, will help Pakistan keep pace with global trends in digital finance and provide a regulatory framework for emerging technologies.

The meeting concluded with a reaffirmation of the government's commitment to supporting businesses like Afiniti, and the importance of continued collaboration between the public and private sectors to foster growth and development in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Afiniti's delegation meeting with Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb to discuss business expansion, talent recruitment and taxation reforms.

PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 663 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 663.42 points, a positive change of 0.57 percent, closing at 116,199.59 points as compared to 115,536.17 points on the last trading day.

A total of 507,512,741 shares were traded during the day as compared to 360,456,374 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs34.105 billion against Rs21.039 billion on the last trading day. As many as 448 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 179 of them recorded gains and 211 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 58 companies remained unchanged.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs152.99 per share price, closing at Rs23,260.01, whereas the runner-up was Colgate Palmolive (Pakistan) Limited with Rs35.39 decline in its per share price to Rs1,441.87.

SCCI urges govt for early clearance of containers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry urged the federal government, and prime minister to ensure implementation of directives with regard to expediting clearance process of stranded commercial import containers at Azakhel Dryport to ease difficulties of KP' traders and prevent them from further financial losses.

Fazal Moqem Khan, president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, Chairman of the chamber standing committee on Dryport and executive member in a joint statement issued here on Monday said Prime Minister briefed about current situation of country's all dryport including Azakhel dryport during meeting with presidents of various chambers.

In the meeting, they said the Prime Minister directed early release of stranded commercial import containers in all dryports.

Following PM's directives, the government and authorities concerned

moved swiftly and ordered for release of stranded commercial import containers at Lahore Dryport, even instructed to remain open dryport on Saturday and Sunday, and the move highly appreciable, they added.

SCCI officials reminded that federal minister for Finance, Muhammad Aurangzeb, and State Minister for Finance Ali Pervaiz Malik, FBR senior officials, and Chief Collector Customs KP Khurram Naeem recently visited the chamber house and they also given assurance for early resolution of the Azakhel Dryport issues, despite that the dryport issues were unresolved.

However, they urged the government to take notice of Azakhel dryport situation wherein a large number of commercial import containers stuck for clearance, inflicting billions of rupees financial losses to traders.

Traders have already faced several hardships due to the closure of Pak-Afghan border for the last 24 days that has incurred loss of billions of dollars to both sides of the business

community, the SCCI officials said.

They added trade and industrial activities have slowed down amid the prolonged closure of trade routes.

They went on to say that KP is a war-hit province, which ground reality is totally different from other provinces and business and trade activities are rapidly declining in the province.

SCCI officials urged the government and prime minister to issue orders for the Pak-Afghan border, along with early release of stranded commercial import containers at Azakhel dryport to mitigate sufferings of KP' traders and to carry out smooth trade and businesses.

They highlighted the flight of capital has increased under the prevailing circumstances from KP that has also accelerated unemployment.

Court Notice

In the court of sidra jalal civil judge-III/ judicial Magistrate II,Matta swat. Case #.159/1. Next Hearing date 07/04/2025. Muhammad Saeed VS Umar Ahad.Notice to defendant. 3) Azad Bacha s/o Juma gul.4) Mst. Fareboon.5) Mst.Hussan Aara daughters juma gul .6)Mst.Laiga bibi widow juma gul r/o Ronyal tehsil matta swat. Whereas the above named cannot be served in ordinary manner it is therefore proclaimed or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court on 07/04/2025. at 8.00 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you. Issued today on 13/03/2025. Under my signature and seal of the court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Haleem Civil Judge V/Ilaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar.Suit No 21/1.Institution 27/1/ 2025. Date of hearing, 26/3/2025. Rahim Zada VS Gul Nawab etc. declaratory Suit.Notice to No.2.Gul Nawab s/o Jalandar resident of Ghazikhanay tehseel Gadezal district Buner.Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 26/3/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

‘Govt taking steps to stabilize energy prices’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaz Malik on Monday

said that the government is taking decisive steps to stabilize energy prices and provide relief to the public as summer approaches. He said, "Despite global economic pressures, Pakistan's petrol and diesel prices are the lowest in the region compared to India and Bangladesh. We are committed to protecting the public from rising international energy costs."

He assured that every rupee collected through the Petroleum Development Levy (PDL) would be used to improve the country's energy supply.

On the government's

engagement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), he said that the recent visit of the IMF delegation was successful, and a Staff-Level Agreement (SLA) is expected in the coming days.

"We are working closely with them to align our policies while ensuring public relief" he added.

Addressing concerns over the Rs. 600 billion revenue shortfall, he expressed confidence that economic reforms and rising tax revenue from inflation would bridge the gap.

Minister also mentioned plans to deregulate petroleum prices to foster competition among oil companies and lower consumer costs.

"I've already met with Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) and refineries. I will soon engage with petroleum dealers to address their concerns," he added.

He highlighted the government's broader strategy for an affordable electricity supply, including targeted subsidies for low-income households and investments in renewable energy.

"Our focus is on sustainable energy reforms to ensure long-term economic growth and protect vulnerable communities," he said. He assured that all revenue from energy-related taxes would be reinvested to strengthen the energy sector and provide tangible benefits to the public.

EBM partners with SOS Children's Village Pakistan



F.P. Report

KARACHI: English Biscuit Manufacturers (EBM), Pakistan's leading food FMCG company, has partnered with SOS Children's Villages Pakistan to establish Family Strengthening Program for single mothers.

Since 1977, SOS Children's Village Pakistan, a private non-profit organization, has been working towards the welfare, upbringing and education

of orphaned and abandoned children. The SOS Family Strengthening Program aims to empower single working mothers by providing a nurturing environment for their children while they are pursuing their livelihoods.

EBM and SOS Children's Village held the groundbreaking ceremony in September 2024 at the SOS facility, Karachi. The project is geared towards completion by June 2025.

EBM presented a cheque valued at Rs. 50 million to the Chairman of SOS Children's Village, reinforcing its dedication to nourishing the welfare and education of orphaned and abandoned children in Pakistan.

In a speech on the occasion, Dr. Zeelaf Munir, Managing Director and CEO of EBM, stated, "At EBM, we firmly believe that our responsibility doesn't end at business; it extends to nourishing lives,

hearts and communities. Our partnership with SOS reflects a lifelong commitment to meaningful social impact through women's empowerment, financial inclusion, and youth development. This is an extension of EBM's vision for a Pakistan where women thrive within the home and outside it with the right support system."

In addition to the Family Strengthening Program, EBM has consistently championed inclusivity through its women-centric initiatives. The company has taken significant steps to assist women workers by facilitating their rehiring after career breaks, providing flexible work arrangements, and supporting their overall growth and development. These efforts align with EBM's broader vision of instating an inclusive work environment where all employees, particularly women, can thrive, furthering the company's goal of nourishing lives, hearts, and communities.

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets rose on Monday as investors welcomed Chinese plans to kickstart consumption in the world's number two economy, though worries about Donald Trump's tariffs war continue to cast a shadow over trading floors.

The gains follow a much-needed rally on Wall Street that was stoked by optimism US lawmakers would pass a spending bill to avert a painful government shutdown.

Eyes were on Beijing as officials were set to outline their plans to kickstart spending by the country's army of consumers after years of post-Covid weakness that has been a major drag on economic growth.

The State Council unveiled a set of initiatives on Sunday that aim to "promote reasonable wage growth by strengthening employment support in response to economic conditions", according to state news agency Xinhua.

The plan looks to boost income with property reforms, stabilise the stock market and encourage lenders to provide more consumption loans with reasonable limits, terms and interest rates.

Officials were also looking at raising pension benefits, establishing a childcare subsidy system, and ensuring workers' rights to rest and holidays are legally protected.

The move comes after data showed consumer prices dropped into deflation in February for the first time in a year, while producer prices continued to fall.

However, observers warned that leaders had a tough job ahead of them amid Trump's trade war.

"While fiscal spending targeting domestic demand has expanded, government support is limited," said economists at Moody's Analytics, adding that "mercurial US economic policies are set to drag on

global trade and hit China".

"With China firmly in US President Donald Trump's sights, deflation concerns in China will worsen. The chaos of tariffs and rising unemployment will keep consumer spending weak, denting inflation's demand drivers."

"Manufacturers will have to look closer to home to sell tariff-targeted products. That combination -- weaker demand and more domestic supply -- will be a handbrake on price growth."

Data on Monday provided a little support, with retail sales up slightly more than expected in the first two months of the year, while industrial production also topped estimates.

Hong Kong gained to build on a blockbuster start to the year fuelled by a chase into Chinese tech giants, while Shanghai, Tokyo, Sydney, Singapore, Seoul, Taipei, Mumbai and Manila also enjoyed healthy buying.



In brief

Afridi ruled out of National T20 Cup

LAHORE (APP): FATA's Left-arm spinner Asif Afridi has been ruled out of the ongoing National T20 Cup 2025 with a fracture in the Zygomatic bone during a practice session at the Gaddafi stadium on Sunday evening. Asif, who was set to lead FATA in the ongoing National T20 Cup, was hit below the right eye in a freak training incident when a ball ricocheted from a pole during his side's practice session. He was taken to hospital for scans, which revealed a fracture in his Zygomatic bone, resulting in his withdrawal from the tournament. The PCB medical department will continue to monitor Asif's treatment and progress, while also preparing his rehabilitation plan in consultation with concerned eye specialists.

Kohli not ready to retire

BENGALURU (Reuters): Indian batsman Virat Kohli said he may not have another tour of Australia left in him after his team's humbling 3-1 Test series defeat Down Under but the 36-year-old has ruled out retiring anytime soon as he still enjoys playing the game too much. Kohli arrested a long run of poor form with an unbeaten ton in the series opening Test in Perth in November, but frequently chased balls moving away from his stumps and managed a total of 190 runs at an average of 23.75. Speaking at the RCB Innovation Lab Indian Sports Summit on Saturday, Kohli said the slump was reminiscent of his dismal run in England in 2014 where he made 134 runs. "If you ask me the intensity of how disappointed I've been, the recent Australia tour would be the one that's most fresh. So it might feel the most intense," Kohli said. "For a long time, the tour of England in 2014 bothered me the most. But I can't look at it that way. I might not have an Australia tour again in four years. I don't know. You have to make peace with whatever's happened in your life." Kohli quit Twenty20 internationals after India's World Cup win last year but continues to play in the Indian Premier League for Royal Challengers Bengaluru. He remains a key member of India's Test team, and played a big role in their 50-overs Champions Trophy triumph last week.

Cavs win streak halted after Magic comeback

LOS ANGELES (AFP/APP): Paolo Banchero scored 24 points as the Orlando Magic overtook a 13-point deficit to end the Cleveland Cavaliers' 16-game NBA unbeaten streak with a gutsy 108-103 road victory on Sunday. Cleveland, the runaway Eastern Conference leaders, had looked poised to extend their franchise-record winning run after surging clear of Orlando early in the third quarter. But after a season where they have staged hefty winning comebacks of their own, the tables turned on Cleveland in the face of a furious burst of Orlando scoring. The Magic outscored Cleveland 35-23 in the third quarter, with Franz Wagner leading the charge with nine points and Banchero adding seven. Although Cleveland led by a slender 83-82 margin heading into the fourth quarter, and threatened to stretch away once more after Donovan Mitchell's driving layup made it 91-84, Orlando refused to roll over. Eight more points from Wagner in the final frame and five apiece from Banchero and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope saw the Magic home to silence a 19,432 sellout crowd at Cleveland's Rocket Arena.

Andreeva, 17, tops world No. 1 Sabalenka for Indian Wells title

INDIAN WELLS (AFP/APP): Russian 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva topped world number one Aryna Sabalenka 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 on Sunday to capture her second WTA 1000 title at Indian Wells.

Andreeva, who last month became the youngest ever player to win an elite 1000 level crown with her triumph in Dubai, ended a frustrating run against the Belarusian to ensure she will rise to a career-high sixth in the world on Monday.

Andreeva shook off her first set problems and broke Sabalenka three times in the third. In a match of swinging shifts of momentum, Andreeva was in full control by the end, giving herself a match point on Sabalenka's serve with a defensive lob that forced a miss from the number one and clinching victory with a forehand winner.

"I would like to thank myself for fighting to the end," Andreeva said. "I was running like a rabbit today because Aryna she was sending bullets and it was really hard to keep up." Andreeva claimed her first



hard court victory over Sabalenka, who had beaten her twice already this year at Brisbane and the Australian Open.

Sabalenka had powered into the final without dropping a set but it was another disappointment for the Belarusian, who was stunned by Madison Keys in the final at Melbourne to see her bid for a third successive Australian Open title denied. Andreeva had Sabalenka under pressure early, and the youngster's frustration was evident as she was unable to convert four break points in the third game.

Sabalenka took full advantage, breaking the Russian to love for a 3-1 lead and keeping her foot firmly on the accelerator from there. Sabalenka backed up her

power from the baseline with some confident forays to the net, breaking Andreeva to take the opening set in 37 minutes. Sabalenka fought off another three break points to open the second set, but Andreeva finally gained a foothold with a break for 2-1 -- pouncing on a Sabalenka second serve to end a run of 18 missed break point chances against the Belarusian this year.

Andreeva followed with a quick hold for 3-1 and suddenly it was Sabalenka who looked lost. Andreeva saved a pair of break points to push her lead to 4-2, her winners tally climbing with her confidence. After missing one chance to take the set on Sabalenka's serve, Andreeva sealed the set with her first love service game, complete with a pair of aces to close it.

The Russian maintained her momentum as she broke Sabalenka to love to open the third. Sabalenka promptly broke back, but that proved just a speedbump as Andreeva broke again for 2-1 and didn't face another break point on the way to her first career win over a reigning number one.

Junaid Zafar dies during match in Australian extreme heat

ADELAIDE (Agencies): Junaid Zafar Khan, a Pakistan-origin club cricketer in Australia, tragically passed away after collapsing on the field during a match played in extreme heat in Adelaide.

The 40-year-old cricketer was representing Old Concordians against Prince Alfred Old Collegians at Concordia College Oval on Saturday when he suddenly fell and did not recover.

Despite the efforts of paramedics to revive him, he was pronounced dead at the scene. According to the Australian media, the match was played in hot conditions, with temperatures reaching 41.7°C at the time of the incident.

According to the rules of the Adelaide Turf Cricket Association, matches are called off if temperatures go over 42°C. However, if temperatures surpass 40°C,



games can still take place as long as certain safety measures are implemented.

Khan had spent 40 overs fielding before batting for seven overs. Shortly afterward, he collapsed on the field, prompting an immediate emergency response.

Following his death, the Old Concordians Cricket Club released a statement confirming Khan's passing.

"We are deeply saddened by the passing of a valued member of the Old Concordians' Cricket Club, who tragically suffered a medical episode while

playing on the Concordia College oval today," the club said. "Despite the best efforts of paramedics, he sadly did not survive. Thoughts and heartfelt condolences are with his family, friends, and teammates during this difficult time."

Junaid Zafar Khan moved from Pakistan to Australia in 2013 to work in the technology sector and was remembered by friends and fellow players as a kind and generous person. "It's a huge loss, he was destined for very big things in his life," said friend and cricket teammate Hasan Anjum.

Another close friend, Najam Hassan, described Khan as a "gem of a person." The incident occurs during a severe heatwave affecting South Australia and other parts of the country, with temperatures reaching nearly 40°C in Sydney and Victoria.

Aamir Jamal slapped with large fine for slogan supporting Imran

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Aamer Jamal, the Pakistan allrounder, has been fined over a million rupees (USD 4000 approx.) for displaying a slogan showing support for former prime minister and Pakistan captain, Imran Khan.

Jamal turned up for a Pakistan training day during the home Test series against England in December last year with "804" written on the underside of his floppy hat. That is the prisoner number for Imran, who has been incarcerated since August 2023 and is facing multiple long-term sentences for corruption and other charges. Imran says the charges are politically motivated. The number has become a popular and identifying

rallying cry among his supporters, heard at his political party PTI's rallies and even during a couple of PSL games last year. As Jamal was in training kit and not during a match day expressing a political message, it was not an ICC violation. But the PCB's code of conduct mirrors that of the ICC.

Jamal has been fined under clause 2.23 of that code which states:

Public criticism of, or inappropriate comment in relation to the Board, any of its officials or sponsors or policies, the ICC or any of its officers or sponsors, Player, Player Support Personnel or Match Officials including umpires and match referees, irrespective of when such criticism or inappropriate comment is made.

The clause notes that players cannot "comment on any sensitive, communal, racial, sectarian, political etc" matter.

The fine is thought to be an unusually large one for the breach, indicating that it could be setting an example, rather than specifically punishing a disciplinary breach.

Imran was the prime minister until he was removed by a parliamentary vote of no confidence in May 2022. He and his party have been at odds with the current government of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif. Mohsin Naqvi, the current chair of the PCB, is a key figure in the current government as the interior minister and by constitution, is an appointee to the PCB of the prime minister.

Special Olympics Pakistan squad returns home with 11 Medals

KARACHI (APP): Special Olympics Pakistan's squad, which won 11 medals at the Special Olympics World Winter Games, has returned home.

Upon their arrival at Karachi Airport, the athletes received a warm and enthusiastic welcome from the Associate Secretary General of Pakistan Olympic Association Tehmina Asif, along with officials from Special Olympics Pakistan (SOP) and the family of the athletes. They were greeted with flower garlands in celebration of their remarkable achievement.

Gold medalists Moazzam Iqbal, Afaq Khan, Abdul Saboor, and Minahil Asim expressed their pride in representing Pakistan, stating that they participated in the games with the sole aim of winning for their country. They credited their success to their hard work, the guidance of their coaches, SOP's support, and the prayers of the entire nation.

Chairperson of Special Olympics Pakistan, Ronak Lakhani, emphasized that winning medals in such a mega event is a significant



honor for Pakistan. She

highlighted that the team had been preparing for the Winter Games for the past five years, and the athletes reached the victory stand by delivering their best performances. She also

acknowledged the crucial role of the coaches, whose dedication and excellent training helped the athletes

achieve this milestone.

Tehmina Asif, Associate Secretary General of POA, noted that the World Winter Games featured some of the best teams from around the world, yet the enthusiasm and determination of Pakistani athletes were extraordinary. She added that in Turin, the athletes not only show-

cased their sporting skills but also served as ambassadors of Pakistan, spreading messages of love and peace, leaving a lasting impression on players from other countries. Tehmina Asif also congratulated the athlete's parents for their unwavering support in encouraging their children to pursue sports.

Khushdil penalised for breach of ICC code

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan all-rounder Khushdil Shah has been penalised for breaching ICC Code of Conduct during the first of the five-match T20I series against New Zealand. Khushdil Shah has been penalised 50% of his match fee for a Level 2 breach of the ICC Code of Conduct, said ICC prese release on Monday.

The incident occurred during the first T20I between New Zealand and Pakistan in Christchurch on 16th March (Sunday).

Khushdil was found in violation of Article 2.12 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "inappropriate physical contact with a player, Player Support Personnel, Umpire, Match Referee or any other person (including a spectator during an International Match)."

The incident happened during the 8th over of Pakistan's innings when Khushdil barged into the back of bowler Zakary Foulkes. The act was classified as 'inappropriate physical contact with a high degree of force' and was deemed 'reckless, negligent.'

Khushdil accepted the sanctions levelled by the umpires and Match Referee Jeff Crowe, as a result of which there was no need for a formal hearing. Along with the fine, three demerit points have been added to Khushdil's disciplinary record, for whom it was the first offence in a 24-month period.

If four or more demerit points are accumulated within a 24-month period, they are converted into suspension points. Two suspension points result in a ban from either one Test, two ODIs or two T20Is, whichever comes first for the player. Pakistan lost the first T20I by 9 wickets after they crumbled to 91-10.

McIlroy wins second Players Championship title in playoff



MIAMI (AFP): Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy cruised to a St. Patrick's Day victory at the Players Championship on Monday, defeating J.J. Spaun in a playoff at TPC Sawgrass in Florida.

The four-time major champion completed the three-hole shoot-out in one over par, while Spaun's challenge wilted after a disastrous triple-bogey on the second playoff hole.

"This is the third time I've won on St. Patrick's Day, so it's been a good luck charm for me," McIlroy said after sealing the second Players Championship of his career and 28th PGA Tour title overall.

"I was lucky enough to do enough to get it done, but unbelievably proud and happy to win my second Players ... It's really nice," McIlroy added.

"I went home last night thinking 'I should have had this.' But I went home and reset, didn't have a great night's sleep, but was lucky enough to get it done."

McIlroy had finished tied at the top of the leaderboard with Spaun following Sunday's storm-

hit final round after failing to hold on to a three-shot lead with five holes to play.

But after returning to the course on Monday in bright, breezy conditions, there was no sign of a repeat of the late stumble by McIlroy on Sunday that had allowed Spaun to force his way into the first playoff of his career.

McIlroy struck first on the opening playoff hole, the par-five 16th, crushing a 336-yard drive straight down the fairway before reaching the green in two. Spaun meanwhile looked out of sorts from the get-go, finding the fairway rough off the tee before landing his second shot into the greenside bunker.

McIlroy failed to make his 33-foot eagle putt but calmly rolled in an awkward five-footer for birdie.

'More complete player' Spaun, whose recovery out of the bunker left him with a long, unsuccessful birdie putt, could only par.

After that early wobble, things got worse for Spaun at the par-three 17th island hole, with the American plunging his tee-shot into the water

behind the green.

Spaun then missed a long 10-foot putt for double bogey and eventually finished with a triple-bogey six.

While McIlroy missed his birdie chance and a 10-footer to save par, his bogey four still left him three shots clear heading to the 18th.

McIlroy's tee-shot on the last went well wide of the right fairway, but Spaun was unable to exert pressure, also going wide of the fairway.

Both players reached the green in three and missed their par putts. McIlroy coolly tapped in for bogey to seal victory.

McIlroy's win marked the second title of the season for the Northern Irishman as he build towards the Masters in Augusta next month -- the only major missing from his collection.

McIlroy said his early season form was a reward for the hard work he has put in over the years.

"I've worked really hard -- I feel like I'm a way more complete player than I was a few years ago," McIlroy told NBC. "I feel like I can play in all conditions and anything that comes my way. Really happy that I was able to get it done today."

Spaun meanwhile was left reflecting on a disappointing outcome.

"It's hard not to feel discouraged a little bit, but nothing but positives," Spaun said. "Putting myself in contention and giving myself a chance to win in a playoff -- if someone had told me that would happen at the start of the week I would totally have taken it."

"Hopefully I can just learn from this and get it done next time."

Nigeria seek WC redemption, Sudan eye history

JOHANNESBURG (AFP/APP): Underperforming Nigeria and disadvantaged Sudan share the spotlight ahead of two 2026 World Cup qualifying matchdays in Africa from Wednesday. Seeded to win Group C and automatically qualify, a Nigerian team boasting the past two African Footballers of the Year Victor Osimhen and Ademola Lookman lie fifth in a six-team section.

In a qualifying competition spanning three years, the Super Eagles drew with Lesotho, Zimbabwe and South Africa, then crashed to Benin in pursuit of a seventh World Cup appearance. Since finishing 2024 Africa Cup of Nations runners-up to hosts Ivory Coast, Nigeria have had three coaches -- locals Finidi George and Augustine Eguavoen and

now Eric Chelle.

Fired by Mali after a poor start to their World Cup campaign, Ivory Coast-born Chelle admits he faces a "huge challenge", starting with Rwanda away and Zimbabwe at home this month. Blessed with outstanding forwards Osimhen and Lookman, the coach says "football is about scoring goals and I favour an attacking style".

Seeded fifth in Group B, Sudan occupy first place ahead of a top-of-table clash with three-time World Cup qualifiers Senegal in Benghazi as they try to reach the finals for the first time. The match is in Libya because Sudan has been engulfed in a civil war since April 2023. The conflict has claimed tens of thousands of lives and uprooted more than 12 million people. AFP



Sport highlights five match-day five clashes as the African qualifying schedule reaches the halfway mark: Ethiopia v Egypt

As if trying to contain star Egypt forwards Mohamed Salah and Mahmoud Trezeguet is not sufficiently daunting, Ethiopia must also deal with recent Manchester City recruit Omar Marmoush. Salah and Trezeguet are the leading

scorers in African qualifying with five goals each -- between them netting all but one of the Pharaohs' 11 in Group A, which they lead by four points. Although this is a home fixture for Ethiopia, ranked 113 places below Egypt, it will be staged in Morocco because the east African country lacks a FIFA-approved stadium.

Sudan v Senegal Ghana-born Sudan coach Kwesi Appiah has told his squad to imagine they are world superstars as they seek to stretch a two-point Group B lead over Senegal. "Look straight at the Senegalese stars and believe you are as good as they are. There is a war raging in your homeland and you are playing for your families and your country," he told them. Senegal can call on 32-year-old two-time African Footballer of the Year Sadio Mane, but will miss another high-profile forward, Nicolas Jackson from Chelsea, due to a hamstring injury.

Rwanda v Nigeria Nigeria may be ranked 80 places above Rwanda, but dare not underestimate the Wasps after what happened in Africa Cup of Nations qualifying last year, Rwanda forced a 0-0 draw in Kigali, then stunned Nigeria 2-1 in

Uyo with Innocent Nshuti and Jimmy Mutisinz scoring within three minutes during the second half.

Chelle will not be the only new coach on view. Rwanda did not extend the one-year contract of German Torsten Spittler and hired Algerian Adel Amrouche.

Gambia v Kenya Former South Africa star Benni McCarthy, part of the Manchester United backroom staff when Erik ten Hag was manager, debuts as Kenya coach, vowing to take the Harambee Stars to the World Cup. "With the right mindset and dedication from the players, and a willingness to learn and give everything they have got, we can surprise a lot of people," says the 47-year-old.

African champions Ivory Coast are set to win Group F, so Kenya need wins away

to Gambia and at home to second-placed Gabon to have a realistic chance of coming second and reaching play-offs.

Ghana v Chad After failing to qualify for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations and a World Cup loss away to shock Group I leaders Comoros, Ghana coach Otto Addo cannot afford any more setbacks.

Chad are pointless, have scored just once, some stars are boycotting this match due to "poor organisation" and coach Kevin Nkaise quit to be replaced by Qatari Tahir Zakaria Gardia.

So, it is hard to imagine Ghana, bolstered by Premier League trio Thomas Partey, Jordan Ayew and Antoine Semenyo, failing to secure three points before a tougher assignment against Madagascar.



In brief

Rawalpindi Police nab 7 outlaws

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Monday continued the crackdown against outlaws and arrested seven accused, including three drug peddlers, two liquor suppliers and two illegal arms owners. According to the police spokesman, the Ratta Amral Police nabbed accused Suleman recovering 2.2 kg charas from him, while the City Police recovered 2.1 kg of the contraband item from accused Shah Jahan. Likewise, R A Bazar Police arrested accused Shahroz with 700 grams charas. Similarly, the Taxila and Jatli Police caught accused Muhammad Ali and Ali Haider with a 30-bore pistol along with ammunition each. The Waris Khan and Cantt Police recovered 6 litres of liquor each from accused Safdar and Shehryar.

Wife's killer gets lifetime imprisonment

RAWALPINDI (APP): A court has sentenced an accused to lifetime imprisonment for killing his wife. According to the details the criminal Khalid Mahmood killed his wife, Late Arifeen, over a domestic dispute in the year 2018. The crime took place in an area of R.A Bazar police station. A case was registered against the criminal who was arrested by the police same year. In view of solid evidence and effective prosecution, the court sentenced the criminal to life imprisonment along with a fine of Rs. 500,000. Appreciating the investigating and legal teams, CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani said that sentence award to the accused involved in serious cases is a victory of right and justice.

Campaign against price gouging continues

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad district administration's (ICT) campaign against price gouging continued for a tenth day, resulting in 170 inspections, 74 arrests and nine shops sealed. According to DC office, Assistant Commissioners and Price Control Magistrates conducted the operations throughout the city. Those arrested were found to be violating established price lists. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Irfan Memon emphasized the administration's commitment to enforcing price controls and ensuring the availability of affordable goods. He stated that there would be "no compromise" on quality or pricing. The administration is also actively monitoring supplies at Ramadan bazaars and fair price shops to ensure adequate stock for consumers. The DC's office is conducting daily inspections and meetings with citizens, and a 24/7 helpline remains active for complaints.

RCB conducts operation against encroachments

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) conducted a massive operation against encroachments in People's Colony Bazaar in which encroaching material of 13 trucks were seized. The operation was launched on the basis of monitoring and surveillance of the areas. According to the details, DG (ML&C), had instructed RCB for conducting anti encroachment-operation in various major bazaars of the Cantt areas. During the operation, hundreds of illegal sheds, signboards, iron fences outside shops were demolished, footpaths and paved paths outside shops were also demolished. Operations are being conducted Under the supervision of Additional CEO Arshad Khan.

Pak, UAE discuss bilateral ties, railway development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Monday met with United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador to Pakistan Ahmed Al-Tahiri and discussed bilateral cooperation, particularly in rail sector.

Ambassador Al-Tahiri congratulated Hanif Abbasi on assuming his new role and extended his best wishes for his tenure, said a news release.

The envoy also expressed deep sorrow over the recent terrorist attack on the Jaffar Express in Baluchistan, where the ter-

rorists attempted to hijack the train and took passengers hostage.

The ambassador condemned the attack and conveyed his sympathies to the victims and their families.

During the meeting, both sides acknowledged the longstanding and strong ties between Pakistan and the UAE. The ambassador reaffirmed his country's commitment to further strengthening this partnership, emphasizing the deep-rooted friendship and mutual respect between the two nations.

The minister highlighted Pakistan Railways' ongoing

efforts to enhance services through strategic partnerships with domestic and international suppliers.

He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment and encouraged UAE investment in the country's railway infrastructure.

Both the sides explored opportunities for expanding economic and trade relations, with a particular focus on railway projects and broader investment opportunities. They agreed to continue discussions and collaborate further in the rail sector and other economic domains.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi meets UAE Ambassador, discusses bilateral cooperation and railway development projects. —APP Photo

Pakistan, Bangladesh pledge to boost bilateral cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain and Adviser to the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Bangladesh, Brigadier General (Retd.) Dr M Sakhawat Hossain to discuss on advancing shared goals and strengthening bilateral ties.

On the sidelines of the 353rd Governing Body session of the International Labour Organization (ILO), a meeting was held between Chaudhry Salik Hussain, and Brigadier General (Retd.) Dr M Sakhawat Hossain, said a press release issued here on Monday.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Workers Welfare Fund Zulfikar Ahmed and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN in Geneva Bilal Ahmad and senior officials from both sides.

Chaudhry Salik Hussain emphasized the deep historical, cultural, and faith-based connections between Pakistan and Bangladesh, highlighting the importance of building on this foundation to foster closer relations. Both sides reiterated the need for enhanced high-level engagements and institutional cooperation to establish mutual trust and collaboration.

Key areas of discussion included expanding eco-

nomie, trade, and investment linkages, fostering people-to-people ties through cultural and academic exchanges, and promoting parliamentary and institutional interactions. Both delegations recognized the potential for collaboration in labor rights, skills development, and workforce mobility as a means of driving economic growth.

The meeting also underscored the importance of coordination on key regional and global issues at multilateral forums. Both parties agreed that renewed efforts to strengthen this partnership would contribute to greater regional stability and prosperity.

Naqvi praises KP police for foiling terrorist attacks

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi lauded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Police for their swift and courageous response in thwarting coordinated terrorist attacks on three police stations.

The incidents, carried out by Khawarji terrorists, were successfully repelled due to the valor and quick action of the police officers.

In a statement issued on Monday, Minister Naqvi commended the bravery of the KP Police, acknowledging their critical role in safeguarding the region against the persistent threat of terrorism. "The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police have once again demonstrated their unwavering commitment to protecting the lives of citizens and upholding the

rule of law. Their swift action and courage in confronting the terrorists have foiled malicious plans and saved countless lives," Naqvi stated.

According to officials, the attacks took place late Sunday night when heavily armed terrorists attempted to storm three separate police stations in different parts of the province. However, the alert police forces engaged the assailants in intense gun battles, successfully repelling the attacks and preventing significant damage.

Minister Naqvi highlighted the sacrifices and resilience of the KP Police, describing them as the vanguard in Pakistan's fight against terrorism. "The KP Police have always stood on the frontlines, facing the enemy with valor and determina-

tion. Their actions are a testament to their unwavering resolve in the battle against terrorism," he remarked.

He further expressed solidarity with the police force and reiterated the federal government's support in strengthening their capabilities.

"The entire nation stands behind our brave police officers. We will continue to work together to defeat the nefarious plans of Khawarji terrorists and ensure peace and stability in the region." The minister concluded his statement by saluting the police personnel and extending prayers for their safety and success in future operations. Security has since been heightened across the province, with law enforcement agencies remaining on high alert to counter any further threats.

ASCFO screened 350,000 children in one year

RAWALPINDI (APP): The General Manager of Al-Shifa Centre for Community Ophthalmology (ASCFO), Dr. Najam, said on Monday that during the financial year 2024-25, the ASCFO screened over 350,000 children at school screening camps.

Talking to the media, he said that Al-Shifa Trust (AST) issued a compelling call for mandatory eye screenings for all children at the time of their school admission. Dr Najam stressed that the issue needs immediate attention to address the rising vision problems and early treatment was crucial to prevent vision loss rather than expensive medical interventions later.

He said that at least 50 to 60 per cent of school-going children suffer from different vision problems, however, if identified and treated early, these issues could be prevented from leading to serious eye diseases. He added that many children remain undiagnosed due to a lack of awareness, financial constraints, and limited access to eye care and early detection and improved concentration and learning ability, significantly enhancing their prospects.

Dr Najam stressed that while many organizations actively provide eye care services to children, the magnitude of the problem calls for more concerted efforts, especially with the growing number of children due to the population explosion. He said that the population of children in Pakistan was around 100 million, but current initiatives address only a small fraction of them for eye screening.

Dr Najam said that in many far-flung areas, as much as 50 per cent of the children suffer from eye problems, which was shocking as delayed intervention could lead to permanent vision loss in some cases. "In some of the remote areas, fifty to sixty percent of the children were diagnosed with eye problems, including hazy vision, congenital cataracts, and myopia." He stated that the Al-Shifa Centre for Community Ophthalmology's primary goal was to arrange school screening eye camps to assist children suffering from eye diseases and to inform them about preventive measures.

He informed that AST initiated its outreach project in 1992. Free eye camps were arranged throughout the country to assist individuals in the areas where the majority lacked the means to obtain quality healthcare.

He said that from 2013 to 2025, AST has served over 4.2 million eye patients and performed over 54 thousand surgeries. The General Manager of ASCFO emphasized that eye-related issues were rising at a concerning rate; thus, public and private entities must enhance their efforts to address this challenge. Dr Najam highlighted that many countries have successfully implemented school-based eye screening programs.



RAWALPINDI: A traffic police official lifting a wrongly parked vehicle with the help of a fork lifter at Murree Road. —APP Photo

ANF recovers over 588 kg drugs in 8 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 8 operations across the country managed to recover over 588 kg drugs worth more than Rs 160 million and arrested 10 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Monday.

He informed that 2 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused arrested in Nazimabad, Karachi.

The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. In another operation, 1.172 kg ice hidden in the trolley bag of

a passenger going to Doha was recovered at Islamabad International Airport.

460 kg ketamine was recovered from a container imported from Germany near Kolachi Road, Karachi.

51.6 kg hashish and 4.8 kg opium were recovered from a truck and motorcycle near GT Road, Gujranwala and 3 suspects were arrested during the operation.

60 kg hashish hidden in a vehicle was seized near M-1 Motorway Islamabad and 2 accused were rounded up.

6 kg hashish was recov-

ered from the possession of an accused netted near Charsadda Road in North Bypass Peshawar area.

1.9 ice was recovered from the possession of a woman arrested near M-1 Motorway Islamabad.

In another operation near M-1 Motorway Toll Plaza Islamabad, 600 grams hashish was recovered from the shoes of an accused travelling in a passenger bus.

Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.

Citizens demand action against professional baggers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Citizens Monday demanded the administration of federal capital to take strict action against the professional beggars for extracting money from the pockets of innocent citizens outside Mosques.

According to them, these baggers exploit the sentiments of worshippers as they use tactics to capture the attention during holy month of Ramadan.

Riaz Alam a citizens said, "a large number of beggars of different age groups including men, women and children are seen outside Mosques particularly during Namaz timing."

They later move to other points like traffic signals and streets to get attention of citizens.

Worshippers said that besides other places a large of professional beggars are present all time at Shah Faisal Mosque.

"They not only create nuisance during Nimaz and Iftar time but also a potential security threat."

Aslam Aman said, "Some worshippers have reported being harassed or intimidated by aggressive beggars, which can be distracting and disrupt their spiritual experience."

The Mosques administration and local authorities should increase security measures and implement effective strategies to deter professional begging in the area.

A worshipper Sakina bibi at Shah Faisal Mosque said "It's really annoying to see these professional beggars every time we come to pray and they are not even genuinely in need, they're just taking advantage of the mosque's charitable atmosphere."

While sharing her experience she said "They have seen some beggars being really aggressive and harassing worshippers for money and it's not right, and something needs to be done about it."

A local Resident Adeel Hasaan said "I feel sorry for those who are genuinely in need, but these professional beggars exploit on the name of poverty which is wrong. The authorities should do something to stop this."

He said "It's disturbing to see children being used by these professional beggars adding that It's child exploitation, and it needs to be stopped."

"I have noticed that some of these beggars are not even from this city as they come from other places just to beg here and It's a big problem, the authorities need to take action, he stated.

Tax incentives for green construction a must to promote sustainability: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senator Sherry Rehman, the Chairperson of Senate's Standing Committee on Climate Change, stressed the need for integrating construction industry concerns into national climate policies and proposed tax incentives for green construction projects and higher taxes on non-compliant sectors.

She was speaking at a high-level consultative webinar, organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here on Monday, said a press release. In her keynote address, Senator Sherry Rehman highlighted the solid waste crisis in major metropolitan areas and its severe impact on the Indus river, the second most polluted river globally. "The informal sector is already practicing cir-

cularity by recycling and reusing materials, but we need formal sector integration into national policies," she stated.

She also called for a dedicated force within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to implement building codes and zero-waste strategies. Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, the Executive Director of SDPI, emphasized that this consultation was a groundbreaking step in linking the construction sector with circularity and zero-emission goals.

He said that unsustainable resource extraction and high carbon emissions were not only harming the environment but also contributing to air pollution such as smog. "We must align Pakistan's greening efforts in the

construction industry with a taxation roadmap that incentivizes sustainability," he concluded.

Dr Suleri said with the rapidly increasing urbanization rate, Pakistan is confronted with various challenges such as climate migration, poor enforcement of building codes, and a lack of sustainable practices. The CEO of National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF), Bilal Anwar, emphasized the construction sector's critical role in the economy, noting its past as a key employment generator.

However, he pointed out that the industry is currently at a standstill, requiring urgent negotiations and reforms. "Despite its significance, the sector has largely evaded discussions on climate change, sustainability,

and green construction practices," he remarked, stressing the need to incorporate modern, eco-friendly materials.

Akbar Mahmood Zaidi, Resident Engineer at ACES 18, highlighted that globally, the construction sector contributes 30-40% of greenhouse gas emissions, with Pakistan producing 25-30% of construction waste, most of which ends up in landfills. He warned that Islamabad's unchecked resource extraction has led to the depletion of Margalla Hills National Park's natural reserves, including sand, cement, and clean water, all essential for construction.

Kamil Khan Mumtaz, CEO of Kamil Khan Mumtaz Architects, pointed out that industrial development, including construction,

is a major driver of the climate crisis. He called upon policymakers to decide between business-as-usual or imposing strict circular economy regulations.

Dr. Saeed Ahmad from NED University underscored the housing deficit, stating that Pakistan requires 10 million housing units in urban centers.

He highlighted past sustainable housing models like 'Khuda Ki Basti' and government initiatives such as the Naya Pakistan Housing Programme and the Sindh Peoples Housing for Flood Affecteds (SPHF), advocating for their replication using low-carbon construction materials.

Ahad Nazir, Director of Private Sector Engagement at SDPI, suggested creating a used-materials database alongside a

certification system to enhance the resilience of the construction sector. "Without incentives, a transition to sustainability will be challenging," he noted.

UNOPS Development Sector Specialist, Nauman Amin, pointed out that infrastructure accounts for 79% of greenhouse gas emissions and 88% of climate adaptation costs. He urged policymakers to integrate sustainability into the taxation framework to drive green construction initiatives.

The consultation emphasized the need for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to drive a green transformation in the construction sector, making it climate-resilient and sustainable for future generations.

Women launch campaign

KABUL (Amu TV): A group of women activists has launched a campaign titled “Let’s Study” to protest the Taliban’s ongoing ban on girls’ education, now entering its fourth year. Women’s Freedom Movement, which organized the campaign, said in a statement: “For four years, Afghan women and girls have been stripped of their rights under Taliban rule.” The group emphasized that education is a basic right, yet girls in Afghanistan remain barred from studying beyond sixth grade.

Media restrictions raised

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Afghanistan National Journalists’ Union and the Afghanistan Journalists Center have released reports ahead of National Journalists’ Day, March 17, shedding light on the situation of media and journalists over the past year. These reports present a concerning picture of the restrictions, rights violations, and challenges faced by the media under the rule of the Taliban administration.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 17, 1446 — Tuesday, March 18, 2025

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

Signing of 2nd phase of Wakhan Road contract

KABUL (TOLONews): The signing of the construction contract for the second phase of the Wakhan road in Badakhshan province has been warmly welcomed by the residents.

They say that building this road has been one of their long-standing demands, and they hope that with the completion of this project, their difficulties will be reduced.

The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development signed a contract last Thursday for the construction of the second phase of the Wakhan road, extending 71 kilometers, with a budget of 143 million afghani, with a domestic company.

“The initiative they have taken should be completed soon because it will serve as a good trade route for Afghanistan, especially for Badakhshan,” said Mujib Hamidi, one of the residents of Badakhshan.

“The Wakhan road is one of the most important roads in the world because it connects China to Afghanistan and, through it, to Central Asia,” said Azizullah, another resident of the province.

Some residents of Wakhan district have also expressed hope that with the completion of this project, their lives will become easier.

“We are 100% happy that the Silk Road has been revived, and we hope it will lead to affordability and better facilities,” said Khoshbakht, a resident of Wakhan district.

“If the road is built, it will be very beneficial for the people. Right now, if a patient has to travel to Faizabad, they can’t even reach there in a week,” stated Taj Mohammad, another resident of the district.

Local officials in Badakhshan have assured the security of this project

and emphasized its importance.

“Alhamdulillah, the Islamic Emirate has fully prepared for the construction of this road after signing the contract, and it will be carried out in the best possible way,” said Aminullah Tayeb, the deputy governor of Badakhshan.

“The Wakhan road is not only economically beneficial for Afghanistan but also for neighboring countries, and, Insha’Allah, it will be a fundamental road,” stated Amanullah Chira, the head of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in Badakhshan.

The Wakhan corridor, which extends from Faizabad city, the center of Badakhshan, to the Yarkand area of China, is approximately 500 kilometers long and passes through border heights at an elevation of 5,000 meters above sea level.

IEA urges global help for refugees

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has called on the United Nations, the European Union and other international institutions to pay special attention to the issue of Afghan refugees.

The caretaker government also said Afghan refugees’ rights should not be trampled upon due to unjust decisions made by neighboring countries, and that they should not suffer oppression or injustice.

On the other hand, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) says discussions are ongoing with Iran to prevent the forcible expulsion of Afghan refugees and ensure their return in an organized manner.

In a statement, the Presidential Palace said a meeting of the High Commission for Addressing Refugee Issues was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Prime Minister Maulvi Abdul Salam Hanafi.

At the meeting, discussions were held on ways to better address the issues of refugees. The participants asked all committees involved in resolving refugee issues to accelerate their activities to ensure quicker services.

The meeting urged neighbouring countries to avoid the abrupt and forced expulsion of Afghan refugees, to bring the services provided to refugees to positive conclusion and to coordinate efforts for the safe return of Afghans to their country through a joint mechanism.

The commission called on the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the UN, the EU and other international bodies to pay special attention to the problems of Afghan refugees, so that their rights were not violated.

The international organizations were urged to work with host countries to ensure a proper process for the safe return of refugees, following a special mechanism.

The IEA has taken serious steps to address refugee issues. It has promised continued use of available resources to serve them, making every effort to ensure all Afghans live peacefully in their own country.

This comes at a time when reports have surfaced again regarding the forced expulsion of Afghan refugees from Iran.

Additionally, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation announced Irfan Jamal, the head of UNHCR in Afghanistan, met the acting minister, Maulvi Abdul Kabir.

The two sides discussed ways to assist Afghan refugees and resolve their issues. Irfan Jamal promised assistance to refugees would continue.

He said the UNHCR was working with Iranian authority to prevent any disorganized repatriation of refugees.

Jamal also stressed the importance of organising trilateral and quadrilateral meetings to resolve the issues of Afghan refugees. He underlined the need for cooperation from all sides.

Maulvi Kabir stated the assistance provided by the UN to Afghan refugees was crucial and assured the aid from the UNHCR to the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) would be delivered transparently.

Uzbeks keen to invest in construction, mining sectors

KABUL (Ariana News): Uzbek investors met last week with Afghanistan’s Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry, Ahmadullah Zahid, and showed an interest in the construction and mining sectors in Afghanistan. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) said in a statement after the meeting that the Uzbek delegation had been assured that Afghanistan was secure and that there are vast investment opportunities in the construction and mining sectors.

Zahid reaffirmed the government’s commitment to supporting both domestic and foreign investors, ensuring a favorable business environment. He also said he hoped the investments would help boost Afghanistan’s economy and further strengthen economic relations between the two



neighbouring nations. This comes after Uzbekistan opened a trade center in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif early this month.

The trade center provides Uzbek entrepreneurs with a platform to market their goods in Afghanistan.

Trade turnover between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan totalled \$153.7 million in January 2025. This is 231 percent more against the same period last year (\$46.3 million in January 2024).

The Uzbek Ministry of Investment, Industry and

Trade said last month that Uzbekistan and Afghanistan plan to increase the trade turnover to \$3 billion.

The latest development comes amid concerted efforts by both countries to boost their cross-border trade relations.

Falling prices frustrate asafotida farmers and traders in Balkh

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): A number of farmers in northern Balkh province have voiced deep concern over a sharp decline in the prices of asafotida plant and resins, urging the government to assist them in finding better markets for their products.

Mohammad Baqir, a farmer from Sholgara district, said he planted 50 kilograms of asafotida seeds on his land last year, purchasing each kilogram for 15,000 afghanis.

“At that time, each plant was valued at 10 afghanis, but now, several plants are sold for just one afghani,” he lamented.

Similarly, Abdullah, a farmer from the Omar Farooq area of Mazar-i-Sharif, said that many

farmers had recently switched to asafotida cultivation.

He explained some even sold household items to invest in the crop, expecting high profits.

However, this year, the prices of both the plants and resin fell dramatically, leaving farmers in a dire financial situation.

At the same time, traders in the province are also concerned about the steep drop in asafotida prices.

Jan Gul Khyber, a trader, said the price of asafotida and its resin had dropped significantly compared to last year.

“In previous years, the price of a kilogram of asafotida resin hovered between 5,000 and 30,000 afghanis, but this year, the

price has dropped to just 3,000 afghanis,” he explained, urging the government to help them find better market for the product.

Meanwhile, Feroz Sadri, a member of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, attributed the price decline to overproduction in the province.

According to him, India was the only major international market for asafotida resin, with an annual demand of about 1,000 tonnes.

However, excessive cultivation in Afghanistan, particularly in Balkh, has led to a market surplus, causing prices to plummet, he added.

Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesperson for the Ministry of

Commerce and Industry (MoCI), told Pajhwok that in the past 10 months, Afghanistan exported 1,195 tonnes of asafotida worth 111 million US dollars to international markets.

He said the exports were made to Uzbekistan, Iran, India, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

According to the Balkh Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, about 500 hectares of land are currently under asafotida cultivation in Sholgara, Balkh, Dehdadi, Nahr-i-Shahi, Dawlatabad, Chahar Bolak, and Chamtal districts.

Afghanistan is one of the world’s largest asafotida producers, alongside Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan.

Muttaqi dismisses reports of internal power struggles

MUSCAT, Oman (Amu TV): Amid reports of divisions within the Taliban leadership, Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban’s acting foreign minister, dismissed claims of internal power struggles, insisting that loyalty to Hibatullah Akhundzada, the Taliban’s supreme leader, remains absolute.

“There will be no bloodshed over power (within the Taliban),” Muttaqi said in remarks made during a visit to Oman. “If I am a minister, I will serve. If I am not, I will not. This is not a system where a dismissed minister will sulk and demand compensation.”

His comments come as questions continue to swirl over the fate of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Taliban’s acting interior minister, who has not been publicly seen at the ministry for two months. The ministry has not released any statements confirming his presence. However, recent photographs circulated by Haqqani’s allies show him alongside Yaqub Mujahid, the Taliban’s defense minister, and Anas Haqqani, his brother. The time and location of the images remain unclear.

The resurfacing of

Haqqani follows reports of growing tensions between the Kandahar faction, led by Akhundzada, and the Haqqani network, a powerful bloc within the Taliban. Some observers believe Haqqani has opposed Akhundzada’s policies and has distanced himself from the leadership.

While Muttaqi insists the Taliban remain unified, Akhundzada appears to be consolidating power in Kandahar, the movement’s traditional stronghold.

A high-level security meeting was recently held in Kandahar under the leadership of Yaqub Mujahid—but notably without Haqqani’s presence, despite his role as interior minister. In Haqqani’s absence, Akhundzada personally appointed and reassigned at least five Taliban police commanders, including Kandahar’s top security official.

According to sources who spoke to Amu TV, Akhundzada has also ordered the deployment of a 2,000-strong special security force, made up of elite fighters from the Taliban’s intelligence and interior ministry, to Kandahar and surrounding provinces.

Arif Rahmani, a former



Afghan lawmaker, told Amu that internal divisions within the Taliban are becoming increasingly apparent.

“The rift is clear and undeniable, especially since Haqqani’s controversial trip to the UAE,” Rahmani said. “He has not returned to the interior ministry since.”

In recent weeks, Haqqani’s supporters have launched a social media campaign, circulating speeches and images that emphasize his vision for governance. One widely shared clip from a speech given a year ago in Khost

Province warned about the dangers of unchecked power.

“When power blinds people, disobedience follows,” Haqqani said in the video. “And disobedience is an insult to faith and to the system.”

A recent United Nations report also acknowledged growing tensions within the Taliban leadership. The UN Secretary-General’s latest assessment indicated that Akhundzada is actively working to consolidate his rule, holding strategic meetings in Kandahar and appointing loyalists to key positions.

Kabul promotes urban culture with free books



KABUL (TOLONews): The Kabul Municipality has distributed books, brochures, magazines, printed materials, and cloth bags free of charge to citizens.

Officials from the municipality stated that the purpose of this initiative is to promote urban culture.

“We are trying to weaken harmful and problematic

cultural habits in Kabul and replace them with positive ones,” stated Nematullah Barakzai, a representative of Kabul Municipality.

Participants in the program emphasized that such cultural initiatives play a crucial role in the development of urban living culture.

They also urged citizens

to take part in keeping the city clean.

“Such programs are very beneficial for our young generation, encouraging them to read more and adopt the habit of using cloth bags to help reduce pollution in our city,” said Samim, a Kabul resident.

“It is important for us to throw our waste in trash bins to keep the city clean. Unfortunately, many young people simply throw empty bottles and trash on the streets,” said Abdul Zohoor, another resident.

“Citizens must actively participate in keeping their city clean,” said Wasi Gul, also a Kabul resident.

Urban culture consists of a set of rules and principles that, when followed by both citizens and officials, contribute to the order and beauty of a city.

OCHA warns budget shortfall threatens aid efforts

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has reported that from January to March 2025, meeting the basic needs in Afghanistan has faced serious challenges.

According to the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), since the beginning of 2025, there has been difficulty in providing essential services such as education, food, health, nutrition, and shelter due to a lack of funding.

Many humanitarian activities have been delayed or disrupted because of insufficient financial allocations.

The organization stressed the need for additional financial support to ensure the provision of these services, transportation, and other related activities.

The funding shortfall has complicated an already dire situation, as Afghanistan grapples with widespread economic and humanitarian crises.

The Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

(OCHA) has warned that if financial resources are not secured, the basic needs of many vulnerable individuals in Afghanistan who rely on humanitarian aid will go unmet.

In response, local officials and humanitarian activists have repeatedly urged the international community to increase financial support for humanitarian projects in Afghanistan to address this crisis.

Meanwhile, the International Red Cross (ICRC) highlighted the rising numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to ongoing conflict and natural disasters, further straining the country’s fragile healthcare and infrastructure systems.

The International Red Cross (ICRC) continues to provide medical assistance but has faced operational challenges due to funding shortages.

The World Food Program (WFP) also expressed concerns over food insecurity in Afghanistan, noting that millions of people face hunger amid the economic collapse.

The World Food Program (WFP)’s country director in Afghanistan emphasized the need for more international aid to sustain food distribution programs, especially in rural areas.

Reports indicated that nearly 50% of Afghanistan’s population is dependent on food assistance, underscoring the urgency of the situation. Additionally, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has raised alarms regarding the impact of the ongoing crisis on children, especially in terms of education and access to healthcare.

According to reports, nearly 3.5 million children in Afghanistan are out of school, with many more at risk of malnutrition and disease.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) continues to urge the international community to provide funding to address these children’s needs, warning that the future of an entire generation is at risk without immediate action.

her life consumed by the overwhelming need to provide for her children.

Nikbakht was only 15 when she married, and her family grew with two daughters and a son. But after the death of her husband, the responsibility of raising and providing for her children fell solely on her shoulders.

She once ran a bakery, but when business declined, she was forced to shut it down. After that, she worked in people’s homes, but those jobs were scarce and short-lived.

Now, she sells basic goods—soap, paper towels, and face masks—on the busy streets of Kabul. On some days, she may make

as much as 50 afghanis, but most often, she returns home empty-handed, struggling to make ends meet.

Nikbakht’s greatest source of anguish, however, is her 23-year-old son, who suffers from a severe mental health disorder. Unable to work, he remains a constant source of worry.

“If we leave him alone at home, there will be trouble for us and for the neighbors,” she says, her voice heavy with sorrow. “He’s mentally ill. He hurts other children. Out of necessity, I have to chain him up. He eats paper and burns his own belongings. By God, the neighbors have given him clothes, but he doesn’t even have those anymore.”

Her son has struggled with mental illness since he was 16, and Nikbakht’s heart breaks as she watches him deteriorate. She cannot afford the medical treatment he desperately needs, and his condition only exacerbates their financial strain.

As the holy month of Ramadan unfolds, Nikbakht laments the fact that her family doesn’t even have enough flour to bake bread. “We are so poor that I often send my children to their aunt’s house so they don’t go hungry,” she says, her voice trembling with emotion. “We ask for help during this blessed month, as we are in desperate need of assistance.”

Shukriya, Nikbakht’s elder daughter, stands by her mother’s side, tears filling her eyes. “Since we became aware of the world, we have never seen our father,” she says softly. “Our mother is both our father and mother.”

Like her mother, Shukriya appeals to the kindness of wealthy individuals to extend a hand to those in need, just as their family does.

Meanwhile, Mullah Shams-ur-Rahman Farotan, a religious scholar, emphasizes the importance of charity, particularly during Ramadan.

“Helping the poor, the needy, and the underprivileged is virtuous at all times,

but it carries even greater rewards during Ramadan,” he says.

“The Prophet (PBUH) said, ‘Whoever provides iftar for a fasting person will receive the same reward as the fasting person, without diminishing the reward of the fasting person in the slightest.’”

He continues by urging everyone, according to their means, to assist those in need, as Allah (swt) will reward them in return for their kindness and generosity.

As Ramadan continues, the call for compassion and support grows stronger, echoing through the streets of Kabul, urging those who can help to make a difference in the lives of families like Nikbakht’s.

Kabul widow seeks support amid extreme hardships



KABUL (Pajhwok): Nikbakht, a 57-year-old widow from Parwan province, now residing in the 10th district of Kabul, finds herself burdened by the weight of both financial hardship and her son’s deteriorating mental health.

As Ramadan ongoing, she calls upon the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) and affluent individuals to extend their support to those in dire need, like herself.

As Ramadan ongoing, she calls upon the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) and affluent individuals to extend their support to those in dire need, like herself.

US vows to keep hitting Houthis until shipping attacks stop

WASHINGTON/ADEN (Reuters): The United States will keep attacking Yemen's Houthis until they end attacks on shipping, the US defense secretary said, as the Iran-aligned group signaled it could escalate in response to deadly US strikes the day before.

The airstrikes are the biggest US military operation in the Middle East since President Donald Trump took office in January. One US official told Reuters the campaign might continue for weeks. A spokesperson for the Houthi-run health ministry said the death toll of the US attacks has risen to 53. Five children and two women were among the victims while the number of injuries rose to 98, Anees Alsbahi, the spokesperson, added on X.

Houthi leader Abdul Malik Al-Houthi said on Sunday that his militants would target US ships in the Red Sea as long as the US continues its attacks on Yemen. "If they continue their aggression, we will continue the escalation," he said in a televised speech. The Houthi movement's political bureau described the attacks as a "war crime," while Moscow urged Washington to cease the strikes.

The Houthis' military spokesperson on Sunday said, without offering evidence, that the group had targeted US aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman and its warships in the Red Sea with ballistic missiles and drones in response to the US attacks. A US defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to Reuters, dismissed the claims, saying they were not aware of any Houthi attack on the Truman.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures": "The minute the Houthis say we'll stop shooting at your ships, we'll stop shooting at your drones. This campaign will end, but until then it will be unrelenting." "This is about stopping the shooting

at assets ... in that critical waterway, to reopen freedom of navigation, which is a core national interest of the United States, and Iran has been enabling the Houthis for far too long," he said. "They better back off."

The Houthis, who have taken control of most of Yemen over the past decade, said last week they would resume attacks on Israeli ships passing through the Red Sea if Israel did not lift a block on aid entering Gaza. They had launched scores of attacks on shipping after Israel's war with Hamas began in late 2023, saying they were acting in solidarity with Gaza's Palestinians.

Trump also told Iran, the Houthis' main backer, to stop supporting the group immediately. He said if Iran threatened the United States, "America will hold you fully accountable and, we won't be nice about it!" In response, Hossein Salami, the top commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, said the Houthis made their own decisions.

"We warn our enemies that Iran will respond decisively and destructively if they carry out their threats," he told state media. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Sunday called for "utmost restraint and a cessation of all military activities" in Yemen and warned new escalation could "fuel cycles of retaliation that may further destabilize Yemen and the region, and pose grave risks to the already dire humanitarian situation in the country," his spokesperson said in a statement.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told CBS News' "Face the Nation" program: "There's no way the ... Houthis would have the ability to do this kind of thing unless they had support from Iran. And so this was a message to Iran: don't keep supporting them, because then you will also be responsible for what they are doing in attacking Navy ships and attacking global shipping." Russian

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called Rubio to urge an "immediate cessation of the use of force and the importance for all sides to engage in political dialogue," Moscow said.

Most of the 31 people confirmed killed in the US strikes were women and children, said Anees Al-Asbahi, spokesperson for the Houthi-run health ministry. More than 100 were injured. The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the claims of civilian casualties. Reuters could not independently verify the claims.

Residents in Sanaa said the strikes hit a neighborhood known to host several members of the Houthi leadership. "The explosions were violent and shook the neighborhood like an earthquake. They terrified our women and children," said one of the residents, who gave his name as Abdullah Yahia.

In Sanaa, a crane and bulldozer were used to remove debris at one site and people used their bare hands to pick through the rubble. At a hospital, medics treated the injured, including children, and the bodies of several casualties were placed in a yard, wrapped in plastic sheets, Reuters footage showed. Strikes also targeted Houthi military sites in the city of Taiz, two witnesses said.

Another strike, on a power station in the town of Dahyan, led to a power cut, Al-Masirah TV reported early on Sunday. Dahyan is where Abdul Malik Al-Houthi, the enigmatic leader of the Houthis, often meets visitors. The Houthi attacks on shipping have disrupted global commerce and set the US military off on a costly campaign to intercept missiles and drones. The group suspended its campaign when Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire in Gaza in January. But on March 12, the Houthis said their threat to attack Israeli ships would remain in effect until Israel reapproved the delivery of aid and food into Gaza.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Sweden, Alexandra Cannell Berg Von Linde called on Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashra at Naval Headquarters.

Imran, Bushra Bibi moves IHC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PTI founder Imran Khan, along with his wife Bushra Bibi, decided to file a petition in the Islamabad High Court seeking the suspension of their penalty in the £190 million corruption case.

According to party sources, PTI's legal team prepared the petition for the suspension of the sentence. The petition argues that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) acted with malice and abused its authority, delivering a hasty verdict based on incomplete investigations. It further highlights NAB's failure to obtain the text of the agreement with the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA), which reflects the investigative body's reluctance. Additionally, NCA officials were not included in the investigation.

The petition asserts that the prosecution failed to present substantial evidence. The petitioners assure the court of their full cooperation and pledge to attend all appeal hearings if the sentence is suspended. The petition requested the suspension of the sentence handed down on January 17 and sought the release of the petitioners on bail until the final decision on the main appeal.

Israeli airstrike kills three in Gaza

CAIRO (Reuters): An Israeli airstrike killed three Palestinian men in the Gaza Strip, medics said on Monday, and there was no sign of progress at renewed ceasefire talks. Medics said the three men were killed near Bureij camp in the center of the devastated Palestinian enclave by a missile fired from a drone. Israel's military said one strike hit three militants in central Gaza as they were planting explosives, while another targeted several militants in Rafah.

In Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, medics said three people were wounded in another airstrike. Rafah residents have reported frequent fire by Israeli forces deployed in areas adjacent to the border inside the city boundaries. The persistent bloodshed underscores the fragility of a three-stage ceasefire agreement between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas mediated by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States.

Israel wants to extend the ceasefire's first phase, a proposal backed by US envoy Steve Witkoff. Hamas says it will resume freeing hostages only under the second phase that was due to begin on March 2. "Hamas has complied fully with the agreement, while the occupation (Israel) didn't comply with some clauses. It (Israel) seeks to foil the agreement and impose new conditions," Hamas spokesperson Abdel-Latif Al-Qanoua said in Monday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Saturday negotiators had been instructed to be ready to continue talks based on the mediators' response to a US proposal for the release of 11 living hostages and half of the dead captives. Hamas said on Friday it had agreed to release American-Israeli soldier Edan Alexander and four bodies of the hostages if Israel agreed to begin talks immediately on implementing the second phase of the agreement. Israel accused Hamas of waging "psychological warfare" on the families of hostages. The war began when Hamas led a cross-border raid into southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and capturing 251 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Police Lines bombing case PHC grants bail to six suspects

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted bail to six suspects, including three policemen, in the Police Lines bombing case, on Monday.

PHC single-member bench of Justice Sahibzada Asadullah heard the petition. During the hearing, the suspects' lawyer argued that the accused individuals, including Fazal Khalq, Hilal, and Abdul Rahman, who are serving police personnel, as well as Usman, who is employed at the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), and two other suspects, Anayat Rahman and Abdul Saboor, were wrongly implicated in the case.

The lawyer pointed out that the main accused, Muhammad Wali, is Fazal Khalq's brother-in-law, and that the only evidence presented against the suspects was a photograph showing

them with Muhammad Wali. The lawyer emphasized that aside from this photograph, there was no concrete evidence linking the suspects to the bombing.

After considering the arguments presented by the defense, the court approved the bail applications, granting relief to the six suspects. The decision marks a significant development in the case, which has been under investigation for some time.

Court seeks govts response in enforced disappearance cases: Acting Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice SM Attique Shah, has heard various petitions filed for the recovery of missing individuals. During the hearing, the court issued notices to the federal and provincial governments, seeking their responses on the matter.

A petitioner, Yousuf Ali,

informed the court that his son has been missing since September 3, 2024, and despite multiple requests to relevant authorities, his whereabouts remain unknown. The Chief Justice inquired about the occupation of the missing individual and was told that he was a student at a Madrassa.

The Deputy Attorney General Ubaidullah Anwar representing the federal government, informed the court that reports are awaited in four missing person cases, while the Ministry of Interior has submitted a report in one case. The Additional Advocate General Nauman Mohib Kakakhel representing the provincial government, stated that reports have been submitted in two cases, and responses will be filed in two new cases. The court has directed all parties to submit their reports by the next hearing.

EU pledges 2.5b euros to Syria in donor drive

BRUSSELS: The European Union has hosted a donor drive for Syria to encourage a peaceful transition following the ousting of former leader Bashar al-Assad. Western and regional powers participated in Monday's one-day meeting in Brussels, chaired by EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas.

Fourteen years of civil war killed hundreds of thousands of Syrians, displaced millions more, and decimated the economy. During the meeting, the EU vowed to provide about 2.5 billion euros (\$2.7bn) in aid to Syria. "Syrians need greater support, whether they are still abroad, or they decide to go home. And this is why today, the European Union is increasing its pledge for Syrians in the country and in the region to almost 2.5 billion euros for 2025 and 2026," said European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock announced that Berlin would provide an additional

300 million euros (\$328m) for the United Nations and other organisations assisting Syrians. "There can only be a peaceful future for Syria if there is an inclusive political process," Baerbock said.

The United Kingdom pledged up to 160 million British pounds (\$208m) in humanitarian aid to support Syria's recovery. The foreign office said the funds would "help provide Syrians with critical water, food, healthcare, and education in 2025".

Last year's donor drive raised 7.5 billion euros (\$8.2bn) in grants and loans to help the people of Syria, but efforts to top that number are set to fall short after the United States rolled back its foreign aid budget. Meanwhile, for the first time, Syria, represented by interim Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani, attended the meeting, the ninth of its kind.

Syria's new leadership is attempting to consolidate control over territory that had been devastated and divided for more than a decade. Last

week, gunmen from the Alawite minority sect, loyal to al-Assad, launched an ambush on a Syrian security patrol that sparked the worst bloodshed since the former leader was overthrown in early December. According to a war monitor, nearly 1,500 civilians, most of them members of the Alawite minority, were killed during the clashes.

Meanwhile, Syrian troops exchanged fire with Lebanese soldiers and armed groups in northeast Lebanon overnight and into Monday in a new round of clashes along the border.

The mountainous frontier has been a flashpoint in the three months since militants toppled Syria's Bashar Assad, an ally of Tehran and Iran-backed Lebanese armed group Hezbollah, and installed their own institutions and army. Late on Sunday, Syria's defense ministry accused Hezbollah of crossing into Syrian territory and kidnapping and killing three members of Syria's new army. — Agencies

PM chairs review meeting

(Continued from Page 1)

The meeting was briefed about the plans to enhance agricultural exports. It was told that establishment of National Agri Trade and Food Safety Authority was in the final stages. A laboratory for testing of agricultural produce in line with the European Union and international level standards was established in HEJ Research Institute of Chemistry in University of Karachi.

A National Ministerial Forum on Agriculture was formed to increase coordination between the federal and provincial governments in the agriculture sector. The draft for national policies on seeds, agriculture biotechnology and organic food was at different stages of approval.

Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanvir Hussain, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzaib, Advisor to Prime Minister Dr Tauqir Shah, Governor State Bank Jamil Ahmed, Chairman Federal Board of Revenue Arshad Langrial and high level officials attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called for the coordinated efforts of all stakeholders to eradicate Hepatitis C from Pakistan, acknowledging the significant support from the Aga Khan Foundation and the World Health Organization (WHO) in this initiative. Speaking at a recognition ceremony here, marking the successful completion of the pilot project of the PM's National Hepatitis C Elimination Programme in Gilgit Baltistan, the prime minister emphasized the importance of the initiative in addressing the widespread impact of the disease in the country.

He said the hepatitis unit was initially established at the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI) and was later expanded to other public sector hospitals, where patients were provided 100% free treatment facilities.

The prime minister expressed regret that when the new government took office in 2018, the program was discontinued. However, he noted that shortly after assuming the office of Prime Minister, he resumed the program, which was now operational in Punjab under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

"We see a bright future of Gilgit Baltistan and subsequently other parts of Pakistan," he said expressing the confident that with the efforts of the incumbent government, Hepatitis C will be completely erased from the country very soon. Earlier, he distributed shields among the contributors to the pilot project of Gilgit Baltistan including Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Health Minister Mustafa Kamal, Minister of State for Health Mukhtar Bharath, and Member PM Task Force on Hepatitis C Dr Saeed Akhtar.

Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, speaking on the occasion, highlighted that Pakistan ranks first in the world in terms of the number of Hepatitis C patients, which he called a matter of great concern. He further stated that the Prime Minister's Hepatitis C elimination program will not only save millions of lives but also contribute to boosting the country's economic productivity.

Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal, lauding the prime minister's vision of eliminating Hepatitis C from the country, assured him of his full support to successfully eliminate the disease from the country by 2030. World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Pakistan Dr Lou Dapeng said the Organization will continue to stand side by side with Pakistan in supporting its programme to completely eliminate the disease.

Stranded US astronauts to return to Earth today

NEW YORK (AFP): A pair of US astronauts stuck for more than nine months on the International Space Station (ISS) will be returned to Earth on Tuesday evening, Nasa said.

Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams are to be transported home with another American astronaut and a Russian cosmonaut aboard a SpaceX Crew Dragon craft after a replacement crew arrived at the ISS early on Sunday. The stranded duo have been on the ISS since June after the Boeing Starliner spacecraft they were testing on its maiden crewed voyage suffered propulsion issues and was deemed unfit to fly them back to Earth.

Nasa said in a statement on Sunday evening that it had moved forward the astronauts' anticipated ocean splashdown off the Florida coast to approximately 5:57pm on Tuesday. It was initially slated for no sooner than Wednesday. "The updated return target continues to allow the space station crew members time to complete handover duties while providing operational flexibility ahead of less favourable weather conditions expected for later in the week," the space agency said.

Nasa astronaut Nick Hague and Roscosmos cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov will also return on the Dragon capsule, with the journey to be broadcast live from Monday evening when hatch closure preparations begin. For Wilmore and Williams, it will mark the end of an ordeal that has seen them stuck for nine months after what was meant to have been a days-long roundtrip.

CM KP directs timely control of dengue fever

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur, as a timely step to effectively control the expected outbreak of dengue fever during the upcoming season, has directed the authorities concerned to urgently prepare and implement Dengue Action Plan 2025.

On the special directives of the Chief Minister, a letter has been sent to Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by the Chief Minister's Secretariat in this regard.

The letter says that dengue fever has posed severe public health challenges in the last several

years, and its effective control requires proactive efforts by all departments. It further says that previous experiences have shown that when structured and coordinated efforts are made during the dormant season, there is a marked reduction in the number of dengue cases in the peak season, adding that building on this, its imperative to immediately develop and execute synchronised activities to ensure all necessary preventive measures are in place before the peak dengue season.

"Dengue Action Plan 2025 should include a detailed schedule of activities for all the relevant departments, outlining pre-

ventive, promotional, and curative measures," the letter reads and adds that a month-wise framework for the entire year should be developed to ensure that all anti-dengue activities, such as surveillance, vector control, environmental management, awareness campaigns, procurement and healthcare responses, are systematically executed. It has further been directed in the letter that the role for each department should be clearly outlined in the action plan so that it contributes effectively throughout the year adding that a comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism be put in place to meet the set objectives.

South African delegation calls on Air Chief

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A high-level defence delegation from the Republic of South Africa, led by Dr Thobekile Gamede, Acting Secretary of Defence, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, at Air Headquarters, Islamabad.

During the meeting, Chief of the Air Staff reiterated PAF's commitment to collaborating with the South African Air Force in military to military cooperation and the training domain.

Dr Thobekile Gamede commended the professionalism and accomplishments of Pakistan Air Force, highlighting its success in the domains of indigenization and cutting-edge techno-



logical advancements. She expressed desire of cooperation from PAF for modernization and servicing of critical equipment. The dignitary also conveyed an earnest interest in bolstering the existing cooperation between the Air Forces of both countries.

This includes cooperation for increased collaborative efforts to revamp training setups, ranging from basic to tactical levels, across multiple warfare domains. The South

African delegation also articulated intentions to re-equip their Air Force and establish an industrial setup aligned with the National Aerospace Science and Technology Park being spearheaded by PAF. This visit of Acting Secretary of Defence South Africa to Air Headquarters, Islamabad is a testament to the strong commitment of both nations to further enhance their military partnership through continued dialogue and collaboration.

NAB asks public to avoid any attractive inducements from Bahria Town

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB), on Monday again informed the public that several cases of fraud and deception against Malik Riaz Ahmed, owner of Bahria Town, and others are currently under investigation.

In a statement, the NAB said that it has filed several references against these accused persons in the accountability courts of Islamabad and Karachi, and these courts have summoned all the accused.

In these cases, the NAB said, there are allegations and irrefutable evidence against Malik Riaz and his associates for illegally occupying not only government but also private land in the name of Bahria Town in Karachi, Takht Pari Rawalpindi, and New Murree, establishing housing societies without permission, and

defrauding people of billions of rupees. It said in recent actions related to this, numerous commercial and residential properties of Bahria Town in Karachi, Lahore, Takht Pari, New Murree/Golf City, and Islamabad have been sealed, including multi-story commercial buildings.

Additionally, hundreds of bank accounts and vehicles of Bahria Town have been frozen, and further actions in this regard are being carried out rapidly. NAB will continue its legal actions against Bahria Town Pakistan without any delay or pressure to fully protect the rights of the citizens of Pakistan.

Malik Riaz Ahmed, who is currently residing in Dubai as a court absconder in the NCA case, has recently launched a new project of construction of luxury apartments there. NAB has prima facie evidence that certain individuals from Pakistan

are criminally aiding Malik Riaz Ahmed in this process by transferring their money to Dubai for investment in this project.

Since NAB has also strong evidence of money laundering against Malik Riaz Ahmed and his associates, these funds have been sent to foreign countries through illegal means. Any funds transferred from Pakistan for this project will be considered money laundering, and legal action will be taken against the involved elements without discrimination.

The NAB has informed that public to avoid any attractive inducements from Bahria Town and to protect their hard-earned savings. NAB, in collaboration with other government agencies, has initiated vigorous efforts to bring back the fugitive accused to Pakistan so that such individuals can be brought to justice.